

**No Compromise
No Political Trading
(Lite)**

BY

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PREFACE:

This pamphlet isn't a speech like my earlier one about strategies. It was written because I gave a talk this summer to my supporters in Berlin about recent elections in Bavaria, and the idea of compromises with other groups. Recently, some people have pushed for our party to work more closely with other political groups. Others keep asking us to join elections in Prussia. This has made many supporters in Berlin and across Germany worried: Could these actions drag our party into corrupt politics—where deals matter more than our values?

These fears grew when Bernstein, a longtime member who used to defend our ideas, wrote a book rejecting our principles. He now claims the only way forward is to follow ideas that protect the wealthy. His book repeats old attacks on our party that our enemies have made for years—it adds nothing new. But because it came out around the same time as debates over joining Prussian elections and some problematic articles (like those supporting the army and militarism), Bernstein's book became a worrying sign. It showed that some in the party might be drifting away from our core goals.

The party was fighting against strict prison laws pushed by conservative leaders. They were just moving past old arguments within the group and hoped their next meeting would fix things. Then, news broke about a political deal in Bavaria. While Bavaria often acts differently from other regions, this time was special: the Social Democrats there openly teamed up with the church-linked Center party.

This shocked many in the party. People worried the party was losing focus on workers' needs. At first, no one spoke up because criticizing might hurt Bavarian members during their election fight. But this silence made others fear the party was drifting toward corrupt politics.

Berlin members asked the author for answers. The author wrote a calm article explaining why the alliance was wrong, but didn't publicly blame Bavarian members. Still, Bavarian supporters reacted angrily, using harsh words. The author wasn't bothered—they saw the anger as proof they were right, since people who know they're wrong often shout the loudest.

Around the same time as the political deal in Bavaria, a socialist named Millerand joined a French government dominated by wealthy business owners. This government included leaders like Waldeck-Rousseau and Gallifet—a man known for killing communists. Millerand's decision caused a split in France's socialist party. Key leaders like Guesde, Lafargue, and Vaillant—who helped build socialism in France—protested. They believed joining this government betrayed the fight for workers' rights, so they left the group.

This event showed the real dangers of making deals with opposing groups. Soon after, a newspaper article titled "Momentary Alliances" tried to defend such

compromises. To counter this, the author (at the request of Berlin supporters) wrote a pamphlet. They wanted to remind the party of its core mission: staying true to the workers' struggle, not mixing with groups that protect the wealthy.

The author explains that their party's policy has always focused on workers fighting for fairness, even if the tactics have changed. This focus separates them from all other political groups.

The pamphlet was written during the author's vacation—on trains, in fields, and even mountains. This made the writing less polished but showed their deep commitment to protecting the party's values before an important meeting.

W. LIEBKNECHT.

August, 1899.

**NO COMPROMISE.
NO POLITICAL TRADING.**

By Wilhelm Liebknecht.

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the Social Democratic Party in Berlin and Vicinity.)

THE PARTY LAW.

Our party has always debated whether to work with other groups. The rules today come from meetings in Cologne, Hamburg, and Stuttgart. At the Cologne meeting in 1893, the party decided:

1. Prussia's voting system is unfair (even called "the worst" by Bismarck). It splits voters into three classes based on wealth, making it impossible for workers to win elections.
2. Working with hostile parties for votes would weaken our unity and values.
3. So, Prussian members should skip these unfair elections.

The party also agreed to fight for fair voting rules everywhere: equal, secret ballots for all adults. This way, workers could elect their own leaders instead of being ignored.

Four years later, in 1897, the Hamburg meeting changed the old rule from Cologne. The new decision said:

1. Prussian party members can now join state elections using the unfair three-class voting system (where votes are split by wealth), but only if they can do so without teaming up with other parties.
2. Each local group decides if joining the election makes sense for their area.

The vote to cancel the old rule passed 160 to 50. The full new rule passed 145 to 64. To avoid confusion, the meeting's leader, Singer, announced (with everyone agreeing):

- Social Democrats must only run their own candidates in elections—no sharing candidates with other groups.

At the Hamburg meeting, Bebel (a leader) made it clear: Voting for liberal party candidates would count as working with other groups, which the rules banned. Even though the decision was clear, some members later argued that supporting liberals wasn't a compromise. Some even claimed Singer, the meeting leader, forced the decision unfairly.

At the next meeting in Stuttgart, right before Prussian elections, disagreements grew. The group had too much to discuss and couldn't settle the issue. They postponed the debate and made a temporary rule to handle elections for now.

At the Stuttgart meeting in 1898, the party agreed on new rules for joining Prussian elections under the unfair voting system (where votes are split by wealth). They decided:

1. These elections aren't about showing worker strength, like national elections. They're only useful to stop extreme conservatives from taking over the government.
2. Not every area has to join these elections. With little time left before voting and disagreements in the party, it's better to let local groups decide.
3. If a local group joins, they can support candidates from other parties only if those candidates promise to:
 - Fight for fair voting rules (equal, secret ballots for all).
 - Block laws that take away people's rights.

Once this decision was made, the party stopped debating other proposals about the elections.

This was the Stuttgart resolution. It was only a short-term plan that left our future plans to the Hamburg resolution. Yet some comrades in certain election areas thought it was okay to work with other parties, even though that went against the resolution and meant making compromises as defined by the Hamburg resolution. In Bavaria, for example, an alliance with the Center party—called a "cow trade" by the comrades—showed that once a small compromise is allowed, bigger ones soon follow. For our party and our plans, there is only one true base: the class struggle. The Social Democratic party was born from the class struggle and gets all its strength from it. Our founders, Marx, Engels, and Lassalle, taught the workers that our movement must be based on the class struggle, and until very recently, no one strayed far from that idea. The Cologne resolution came from a proposal by Edward Bernstein, who was living in London and was the respected editor of the Social Democrat.

Until 1893, no one talked publicly about joining the Prussian legislative elections. In the early 1880s, the democrats in Frankfurt secretly suggested that Social Democracy work with other democrats so that Frankfurt could have a socialist and democratic representative. However, this idea was quietly turned down and not spread.

They believed that such an alliance would weaken the party's working-class character. The benefit of winning one seat was seen as far less important than the harm of teaming up with a party that, in future Reichstag elections, we would have to fight against. Everyone agreed that a seat in the Prussian legislature was important, but it was more important that our representatives come solely from our own strength, not from an alliance with parties that may only share our interests for a short time while remaining hostile in the long run.

Bernstein's proposal for Social Democracy to join the Prussian elections received little support and no one defended it. So, the resolution put forward by Bebel, which opposed such participation, was adopted unanimously.

After many years, the idea of joining the Prussian elections came up again and led to lively debates. There are two main reasons for this:

First: Many comrades changed their views about the Prussian three-class voting system. They forgot that this system was made to block true democratic ideas and to keep most people from voting. At the Hamburg convention, some speakers wrongly believed that fixing this system could wake up the masses. They even thought that we Social Democrats could win seats by ourselves without joining with other parties. Today, everyone knows that we cannot win a single seat in the Prussian legislature without making a compromise or forming an alliance.

Two years ago, our party convention, filled with false hope, decided to take part in the elections. Fortunately, our party leaders remembered the true nature of our party and banned any compromises or alliances with other parties, to keep us on the right path. Some people call the Hamburg resolution contradictory and illogical. However, if our party always refused alliances, there would be no reason to change the Cologne resolution. This so-called contradiction came from some members fooling themselves about how the three-class system worked. To then conclude that our party cares more about joining the elections than avoiding alliances, and to try to fix the contradiction by allowing alliances, shows a lack of logic and respect for our party's history and principles.

Second: There is another reason why joining the elections might cause big fights inside our party. Some in our group want to leave the fight based on class struggle and join with the other parties. All the other parties work from the idea of a political state, so they care only about political gains. I do not mean that everyone who supports the new idea wants this, but some do. It is no accident that Bernstein was the first to suggest that Social Democracy join the Prussian elections. His plan makes Social Democracy more about politics. But for those of us who believe that our party must fight for the class struggle, this idea is simply wrong.

STATE CAPITALISM.

I want to say again that giving up our party's principles is much more dangerous than all of Bernstein's weak ideas put together. Some people claim that in spoils parties, political courage has died out and they no longer care about freedom and justice. This claim has some truth, but it is not a new problem. Aside from a few short times, the German rich never really had true political courage. Yet, we now live in a time when our political and economic conditions make the fights between classes very strong, while at the same time pushing people to drop their principles for their own gain.

Also, the German rich are politically backward, which is why there is no true liberal party here, and not even a real democratic party. Because of this, the honest liberal and democratic parts of the rich are moving closer to Social Democracy, the only party fighting for true democratic ideas in Germany. But joining Social Democracy does not really make them Socialists, even though many believe they are.

In short, we now see in Germany something that has been seen in France for more than fifty years: a part of the radical rich joins the Socialist cause without really understanding what socialism means. This kind of political socialism—which is really just kind, humanitarian radicalism—has slowed down the progress of true socialism in France a lot. It has watered down and confused the ideas and weakened the Socialist party because it brought in supporters who cannot be trusted when it really matters.

Marx, in his writings about class struggles in France, explained this kind of political socialism. It would be a huge mistake if German Social Democracy—which has grown well by always fighting based on the class struggle—lost its way and started making errors. Avoiding these mistakes has been our party's strength and pride, and it has made us a leader among social democratic groups.

When people in politics stop being afraid of us, more political types join our party. If only a few join, it is okay, because the working-class members are many and will eventually absorb them. But if too many political people join and become very powerful, it can be a problem, and the true working-class side might be pushed aside.

This danger of too many political people in our party comes from two things, because our bourgeoisie is backward. First, the democratic people among the bourgeoisie, who do not get enough in their own group, join us in larger numbers than in countries with a strong bourgeoisie. Second, our government's bureaucratic but capitalist style leads toward a kind of state socialism that is really just state capitalism. This looks attractive and confuses those who are easily fooled by fancy words.

The German—or rather, the Prussian—state socialism, which wants a state ruled by the military, landlords, and police, hates democracy more than anything. The Kanitzes and their followers say they are true radical socialists, but they reject

democracy. They see democracy as their enemy, thinking it is only about politics. But true politics goes against real socialism.

This wrong thinking makes some people, even among social democrats, believe that democracy, being political, has nothing to do with socialism and is even opposed to it. Some mistakes, like being against the militia system, come from this bad logic, as did the wrong ideas of von Schweitzer. But the truth is that democracy is not just a political thing. We must remember that we are not only a socialist party but a social democratic party, because we know that socialism and democracy go together.

BISMARCK.

Back in the 1860s, Prince Bismarck wanted to deal with the “Acheron” of socialism. Through Brass, he offered me the job of editing the *North German Gazette*, and later, through Bucher, he even offered Marx the job of editing the *Staats Anzeiger*. Both offers came with full freedom to support socialism completely, all the way to its final goals. But Bismarck didn’t do this because he liked socialism or understood it. At that time, he knew nothing about socialism, and even until his death, he never understood it. In fact, he didn’t really grasp the forces that shape political and social life at all. There has probably never been another so-called “statesman” who was less scientific, had less knowledge, and relied so much on guesswork and a mix of gambling and wheeling-and-dealing than Bismarck.

These offers to socialists clearly prove that Bismarck was not honest when he later claimed that he always saw social democracy as a threat to the state. In reality, he wanted to use socialism to break up and weaken the bourgeois liberal opposition, especially the Progressive Party. This alone is the strongest proof that he had no idea what socialism really was. But just like the boy magician in old stories, Bismarck summoned a force he couldn’t control. What he had called up grew beyond his control, and in the end, socialism didn’t lose to him—he lost to socialism.

The question of strategy came up in our party for the first time. Should we, in exchange for some benefits for workers, help Bismarck against the Progressive Party and his other political enemies, hoping that later we would be strong enough to fight him and the landlord, police, and military state he represented? Or would it be smarter for our party to take advantage of Bismarck’s fight with the Progressive bourgeoisie and his other opponents to challenge his policies while organizing the working class into an independent political party, preparing them to take political power?

For a while, the working class was unsure, but after a few years, the strategy of moving closer to Bismarck’s policies, which was mainly supported by Herr von Schweitzer, was abandoned. Instead, the party fully accepted the strategy that has remained in place to this day. This strategy focuses on keeping the socialist party clearly defined as a party for the working class, training it through activism, education, and organization to win the fight for freedom. It also involves actively opposing the class-based state, which holds both political and economic power for capitalism, while at the same time using the disagreements and conflicts between different political parties to our advantage whenever possible.

BOURGEOIS AND BOURGEOISIE

In Germany, the middle class never gained political power like in France and England. In England, the middle class took control over 250 years ago, and in France, they did so more than 100 years ago. They got rid of old medieval laws and created political freedom. But in Germany, the middle class was never able to start a political revolution or achieve real political freedom.

Germany lost its place in world trade after America was discovered, which hurt its industries. The country was divided into many small states, which weakened national pride and nearly destroyed its spirit. The ruling families cared more about their own power than about the people or progress. Because of all this, a strong middle class never developed. When Germany had a chance for change in 1848, the people still weren't strong enough to make a real revolution. After a short time of freedom, they gave up and accepted the old rulers again.

The middle class was afraid of workers because they saw them as a new and dangerous force. Instead of fighting for freedom, they turned against change, even though they had never really fought for revolution in the first place. They felt guilty for wanting freedom and saw it as a mistake of their youth. Their only goal became making money. The middle class stepped away from politics, either becoming uninterested or fully focused on capitalism. To be capitalistic meant supporting the government no matter what, as long as it worked for the rich and protected the interests of big businesses.

To avoid confusion and misunderstandings, we need to clearly understand the difference between "political" and "capitalistic." These two ideas are often mixed up in German because the word "Buerger" has more than one meaning. We must separate them clearly.

In France, the word "bourgeois" originally meant the same thing as our word "Buerger" did in the Middle Ages. But over time, as the economy changed, "bourgeois" in France started to mean "big capitalist." In Germany, we borrow the French word "bourgeois" for the same meaning, but we also keep using "Buerger" and "buergerlich" without realizing that they don't mean the same thing. This mix-up in language makes it harder to think clearly about these ideas.

When we say "buergerlich society," we are talking about modern capitalist society. But when we talk about "buergerlich spirit" or "buergerlich freedom," we mean the democratic freedom that people fought for in the past, when they were standing up against priests and feudal landlords. This old spirit of freedom is completely different from today's capitalist society, which supports landlords and priests instead of fighting against them.

History shows that politics depend on money and work. In the 1800s, when the way people earned money changed, the middle class also changed its views. Every new step in making money made the fights between classes stronger. This change

pushed the middle class away from its old allies—landlords and priests—and from the rising working class. The working class fought for equal rights and democracy, ideas that the middle class once supported. But when the working class began to stand on its own, the middle class stopped being truly democratic.

In Europe, this change happened during the famous February and March revolutions. The February revolution was a late victory for middle-class ideas, but it also stirred up a clash between what the middle class wanted and what it really needed, which led to a strong reaction. Soon after, in June 1848, the working class in Paris started its own revolution. This early uprising forced the middle class to side with its old enemies, because they feared that a working-class win would mean the end of capitalism. In France, Napoleon was elected President, and in Germany, even during the hopeful start of the March revolution, the middle class longed for a leader to stop the threat of the working class.

The "black reaction" that followed in 1849 showed the true nature of the revolution without any fancy words. Under capitalism, the middle class was forced to become politically reactionary, meaning they acted only to protect their own power and wealth. The "black reaction" that spread across Europe 50 years ago was a necessary part of history, just as the even harsher reaction we see today from strict capitalist policies is.

THE GERMAN BOURGEOISIE NEVER PASSED THROUGH THE LIBERAL STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT.

In Germany, capitalism developed later than in England and France. Unlike those countries, Germany did not first have a time when the middle class was rich and powerful. This meant that Germany's politics had to be different. Imagine a field that has been cleared of old weeds. In Germany, the new, healthy growth had to grow in soil still mixed with dead, rotting weeds from the medieval past—like the old rules of landlordism and semi-barbaric customs. These old weeds, which drain the life from the healthy plants, must be pulled out so the new growth can thrive. The German middle class, which in other lands had made the government their own, was too weak then—and still is too weak—to pull out these harmful weeds.

The weak power of German citizens, both past and present, makes Germany's political life different from that of other modern countries. Because of this weakness, the working class in Germany has been given the task not only of solving its own problems but also of finishing the work that the middle class left undone. Our tactics must match the conditions. When the middle class acts in a true capitalist way, we must fight it. But when the middle class stands against capitalism and the reactionary forces it protects and helps, we should either support it or at least not fight it—unless it directly opposes us, such as in Reichstag elections where a middle class candidate runs against a social democratic one.

Ignoring the von Schweitzer incident, German Social Democracy has always followed the plan set out in the Communist Manifesto. It mainly fights against political reaction and only helps the middle class when that class is truly liberal or democratic. Under no circumstances do we join with reactionary forces in our struggle against the middle class. It is important to stress this because Bernstein, in his argument against our party (which some have praised), has accused us of blindly fighting the German middle class so harshly that it ended up taking shelter with reactionary landlords, police, and a military state. That accusation is completely false.

THE FAILURE OF THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY.

During the big constitutional struggle in the 1860s, there was no real socialist party. In 1864, when Lassalle was killed in a duel with a Wallachian noble named Rakowitz, the Universal German Working Men's Union had only about 5,000 or 6,000 members on paper—and even fewer in truth. This small group could not scare the German Progressive party, which we sometimes say had the timid courage of a rabbit, like the German middle class. Yet the Progressive party gave in to Bismarck. After the civil war of 1866, they even paid him and submitted to his rule. It is simply absurd to blame Social Democracy for that. Yes, Lassalle attacked the middle class very harshly, but hardly any German workers agreed with him. And although Lassalle sometimes got too close to Bismarck's reactionary ideas while opposing the Progressive party, we must remember that at the start of the constitutional struggle he had fought with the Progressive party and only left it when it stubbornly refused to fight seriously as he had demanded.

The German middle class, and this is very important, did not have what was needed for a political revolution in 1862—just as it did not have it in 1848 or earlier. It was more afraid of a full revolution than of a reaction, as I once told a leader of the Progressive party in early 1863. Bismarck, with his mocking attitude and clever tricks, soon made this clear. The Progressives did not seem strong to him; the bolder he was with them, the easier it was for him to control them. To say that German Social Democracy is to blame for the loss of freedom by the Prussian Progressive party is not only untrue, it shows a complete misunderstanding of the role the German middle class has played since the Middle Ages.

I will put two facts side by side. During the time of the constitutional struggle, when the Progressive party was at its strongest and had the support of the people, Bismarck, early in his career, defeated it with great ease. Later, during the time of the anti-Socialist laws, when Bismarck was very powerful and used all his capitalist resources to rule like a dictator, Social Democracy defeated him just as easily—even though all other political parties opposed it. This shows clearly who can fight against reactionary forces in Germany and who cannot.

Even though the German middle class is weak, that does not free us from our duty to help it whenever it truly fights against reactionary forces, as long as our own interests are not hurt. We have done this every time since German Social Democracy became an independent party. For example, in 1865, I was expelled from Prussia because I stopped Bismarck from using Socialists as a tool to crush the Progressive party. I can honestly say that in all my fights against Bismarck's reactionary ways, I have fought for political freedom. In my well-known pamphlet on the political views of Social Democracy, I stressed that our movement is truly democratic—just as

Bernstein has recently claimed as if it were a new idea, even though we have been doing it for over thirty years.

THE PAMPHLET ON TACTICS.

I want to talk about my pamphlet on tactics. It came from a speech I gave in 1869 during the North German Confederation. That time was only temporary. It would soon end, either when Bismarck's Great-Prussian policy fell apart or when the South German States joined in. During this short time, we had to oppose at all costs.

Bismarck set up a system where everyone could vote, like Napoleon did. But he did not do this to give power to the people. He did it to hide his cruel dictatorship. Just as Napoleon controlled the vote through his officials, Bismarck thought he could do the same through his local leaders. He found this system easier to handle than the three-class voting system. That older system was controlled by the middle class, which had made the top two classes a safe stronghold for itself.

The history of the Prussian three-class system is interesting. It shows how very clever plans by reactionary forces can be undone by economic progress. The system was made to keep out any democratic or opposing voices, and it worked well for about ten years. But one day, the middle class became strong in the economy and grew angry over the terrible rule of landlords and police. They began to feel their own political power. They decided that if they simply chose to do so, they could win a majority in the top two classes and win the elections.

That idea became real. Prince Bismarck then blamed the voting system for not working as he wanted. The three-class system became known as the worst voting system of all. On the other hand, universal, equal, and direct voting—which had been celebrated during the chaotic year of 1848 and had worked well in Napoleonic France—now shone as a bright hope. It promised to save the state and society by leading to a strong, Caesar-like rule.

So we got universal voting rights—and for another reason too. The top-down feudal revolution that finished off Bismarck's national policy would have just floated in the air if it did not look like a bottom-up revolution had taken place. Bismarck needed the people, even if only as a show, and there was no better lure than the universal vote of 1848. This vote joined the top-down revolution with the 1848 uprising from below, tricking the masses into believing that Prussia—expanded at the expense of Germany and turned into a state run by landlords, police, and soldiers—was true German democracy. Today we know how deep that false belief had grown; it took decades of harsh misrule to get rid of it.

But Bismarck made one big mistake: he underestimated the strength of revolutionary ideas. What happened in France after the June battle, which drove the entire middle class into extreme reaction, was not possible in Germany. In Germany, the state was not so tightly controlled, and thanks to the growth of capitalism, a strong working-class movement grew. This movement was determined to use the national and royal crises to help the workers—to make socialism the main power in

Germany and lead it to victory. The German working class had the advantage of learning real lessons from labor movements in other countries that were ahead in politics and the economy.

It also had very good fortune in being led into political action by great teachers like Marx, Engels, and Lassalle right at the start of its journey. This saved it from the mistakes of joining unions without a clear plan, or from aimless, weak schemes by the middle class to force a revolution. Even though in 1867, when universal voting began, the German working class did not have a very strong sense of its own class, it was still the only class—and the socialist party the only party—that clearly understood the meaning and value of voting. They even overestimated its power a little, but that extra boost made them more excited.

Prince Bismarck hoped to use universal voting in a Napoleonic way, expecting that the Reichstag would stay as it was in 1867—a cover to hide his absolute rule. But that hope was destroyed when the North German Confederation grew into the German Empire. Bismarck's highest triumph in politics ended up being the cause of his downfall. What the strict Prussian military and police might have been able to hold back for a long time in the North German Confederation—like an independent popular movement—could not be stopped in the larger German Empire. The power of the people could not be suppressed, and the envy of the “Federal Princes” toward Prussian power made matters worse. As a result, Bismarck's feudal-style rule could not grow as tall as Napoleon's system through prefects. No clever trick could ever take away from the workers the clear idea that socialism and democracy are inseparable.

“The question,” I began my speech in 1869, “of what attitude Social Democracy should take in the political struggle is answered easily if we understand that socialism and democracy always go together and can never be separated. They are not the same, but they are two ways of showing one basic idea. They complete each other and can never contradict each other. Socialism without democracy is fake socialism, and democracy without socialism is fake democracy. The only real way to organize society is in a democratic state.”

This truth—that democracy and socialism cannot be separated—helped guide the German working class during very confusing times in politics. Because of this idea, they did not fall for state socialism. Even in the 1840s, when the Prussian reaction was moving toward a system run by soldiers and police—a kind of state socialism—they could see it was dangerous. Some thinkers, like Wagener and von Schweitzer, argued that democracy was too tied to the rich and that socialism, because it fought against rich society, must be against democracy. These wrong ideas did confuse some people at the time, but most workers did not accept them. Recently, this false logic came up again during the well-known militia debate, but it no longer has any meaning.

WHAT IS A COMPROMISE?

Before we go any further, we must have a clear idea of what "compromise" means. If we do not, our debates will be confused and go nowhere because everyone will think of it in a different way, and no one will answer another's points.

If we think of compromise as giving up our theories to match real life, then our whole life—and all of human history, from one person to whole nations—is just a long, never-ending chain of compromises. But the idea that we must completely wipe the slate clean to start a new system free of the old is very unscientific and goes directly against our experience. The idea of a "clean sweep" is like a ghost that only lives in the minds of police politicians who say we want to ruin everything that does not fit our plan. These men are really judging themselves, for they believe they have a magic power to ruin everything that time has woven, even if it is done without permission from the chief of police.

The makers of the anti-socialist law and the prison law show their deep ignorance through their foolish actions. The natural laws that guide how politics and society grow cannot be changed or canceled by force, just as you cannot change the laws that let an animal or a plant grow. Whoever uses violence to interfere can only disturb and destroy; that is always what happens when police politicians act.

What these meddling men, who call themselves "statesmen," say about us social democrats—that we cannot create anything but only destroy—is simply a mirror of their own actions. There is not one fault or sin among the many they accuse us of that they have not taken from themselves.

Let me add one more example. For twenty years, people have said that Social Democracy wants to create a dictatorship run by the working class. The truth is that for fifty-one years since the June battle in Paris, Europe has actually been ruled by the middle class. This rule was imposed with violence and war against the workers. After that battle, it led to the terrible killings during the Commune and many other massacres of workers. This is a rule that takes away the right to vote and even basic legal rights from the working class. It has shown itself in many special laws enforced by force. In Germany, we have the Anti-Socialist law, the prison bill, and other laws like the Loebtau judgment and the perjury trial at Essen as proof of this.

And if "King Stumm," who now rules in the name of "social reform," succeeds in wiping out all organizations of workers, what difference would there be between that rule and the dictatorships of old, like those under Marius or Sulla, or even the French government of 1792-1794? The political power that Social Democracy seeks and will win is not meant to set up a dictatorship of the working class. Its goal is to end the rule of the middle class. The workers' fight is only a self-defense against the middle class's attack. And when the workers win, the class struggle will finally end in all its forms.

We Social Democrats know that the rules by which politics and society change cannot be stopped or altered by us any more than they can be changed by the leaders of a capitalist society. We also know that we cannot simply bring in a socialist way of doing things whenever we want—just as the German Kaiser, nine years ago, could not carry out his bold plans against the capitalist class. Because of this, we watched calmly as our enemies tried to crush the workers' movement by force. We are sure of our success, as sure as one is sure of solving a math problem.

We also understand that changes in society happen slowly and naturally. These changes do not destroy what already exists—the removal of what is dead is not the same as destroying what is alive. We saw this clearly during the French Revolution, which was probably the best planned and most energetic political change ever. Even though there was a period of wild, idealistic dreaming, eventually the new had to fit with the old. Sometimes, a new force might seem to push out the old quickly, but history teaches us that even the most revolutionary and harsh governments eventually must give in to the facts and let what was once eliminated return in some form. In short, if we look at history, the present is always a compromise between the past and the future.

So, to reject any kind of compromise is unwise and unscientific. It would be very foolish for a political party to miss out on chances in politics and not take advantage of the disputes between different parties. Being careful and wise means using every opportunity, and not doing so would be pure stupidity. For example, we Social Democrats in the Reichstag sometimes vote with the Conservatives on social and political issues and sometimes vote with the Radicals on political and business matters. This is a normal part of political battles. Although this means we are making a compromise between our ideas and what really happens, it is nothing like the kinds of compromises that our party has always warned against.

Our party has always clearly said that we must avoid any alliances, agreements, or deals that force us to give up our principles or change our attitude toward the bourgeois parties in a way that hurts us. This point is very important because the main question is exactly this: In the debate about taking part in the Prussian legislative elections, the only issue was whether we would have to sacrifice our party's principles by joining with the Progressive party. None of those who supported participation really meant to give up our core ideas, even though it is important to remember that questions of tactics can easily turn into questions of principle.

If the situation requires working together with other parties, this can always be done without making compromises. Take Belgium as an example. The Liberal party and the Socialist party both had a common goal in fighting against the Clericals. They joined forces and worked together up to a certain point. This could have been done without merging, but instead, they chose to merge. And what happened? They ended up arguing and fighting. These kinds of mergers have proven to be completely

unnecessary. When the shared goal that brought the two groups together no longer exists, the cooperation naturally ends. Even without merging, they would have worked together as long as their interests aligned.

If workers don't always have strong class awareness, the same cannot be said for the wealthy and powerful. The upper class has a much stronger sense of class identity than the working class does. This is true even in countries with democratic laws and systems. Look at Switzerland, which Bernstein calls his perfect example. According to his ideas, class struggle shouldn't even exist there anymore. But we know that's not true—it exists just as much as in less democratic countries. Still, it is true that democracy can help reduce how extreme class struggles become.

In Belgium, where there are both free institutions and a government controlled by priests, election alliances between the Social Democrats and the bourgeois parties have been common. The conditions there have made it easy for such alliances to form. However, in every alliance the Social Democratic party joined, it always took the lead. It was never tricked or taken advantage of. And yet, Belgian comrades have still found problems with making compromises.

Comrade Vandervelde, writing in the *Wiener Arbeiterzeitung*, was happy about the introduction of a proportional voting system in Belgium because it meant the end of election alliances. He wrote that in the future, smaller, less important issues would no longer get in the way of the class struggle, and the distractions that made it hard for the masses to understand the truth of that struggle would disappear.

So, Vandervelde has realized that even in the best conditions for workers, compromises can be harmful because they make it harder for people to see the real class struggle. In other words, when workers form alliances that take them away from fighting for their class, they lose the chance to develop their full strength and use it effectively. The only way for them to do that is by standing firmly on the foundation of the class struggle.

The danger of making compromises isn't about someone in the party deliberately selling out or betraying its principles. That probably hasn't been the goal of anyone in our party. Even when some of our comrades in Essen, during the election before the last one, voted for the "cannon king" just to spite others, they never meant to abandon even a tiny piece of our program. The real problem doesn't come from something as obvious as that.

The real danger comes when the focus on the class struggle is lost, pushed aside, or forgotten. That struggle is the foundation of the entire modern labor movement. It's important to be clear about this and not be fooled by misleading slogans. We need to break free from empty phrases, just as I said many years ago about anarchist talk. Anarchism pretends to be revolutionary, but in reality, it's just weak and backward. It's nothing more than a late, exaggerated version of the old bourgeois idea of freedom, dressed up in dramatic words, but really just a theatrical act copying the world of free-market competition.

SOCIALISM AND ETHICS.

Feeling sorry for the poor, wanting everyone to be equal and free, recognizing unfairness in society, and wanting to fix it—that isn't socialism. Calling wealth bad and poverty good, like Christianity and other religions do, isn't socialism either. The kind of shared living that existed before private property, or the dream of some people throughout history to bring it back, isn't socialism. The idea of forcing everyone to be equal, like the followers of Baboeuf wanted, isn't socialism. All of these things are missing the key part of capitalism: the struggle between different classes.

Modern socialism comes from capitalism and its class struggles. Without them, socialism wouldn't exist. It's important to remember that socialism and ideas about right and wrong are two different things.

Someone who thinks socialism is just about kindness and making everyone equal, without understanding capitalism, isn't a socialist in the way of the class struggle. And without that struggle, modern socialism wouldn't make sense. Bernstein says he supports the class struggle, but it's as empty as a Hessian farmer saying he supports both the Republic and the Grand Duke at the same time. Anyone who truly understands how capitalism works and what socialism is built on knows that a movement that abandons the class struggle might be many things—but it isn't socialism.

The idea of class struggle, which Marx introduced—his greatest and lasting contribution—has become the heart of the modern labor movement. This is exactly what bourgeois economists and politicians attack when they fight against socialism. They deny that class struggle exists and try to turn the labor movement into just another part of regular political parties, making Social Democracy just a small branch of bourgeois democracy. Their goal is to erase the class struggle from socialism because if they succeed, Social Democracy will be defeated, and the working class will once again fall under the control of capitalist society. Even a small break in this foundation would give the enemy a way to widen the gap and eventually claim total victory.

But the most dangerous enemy isn't the one who fights openly. An enemy who attacks us head-on is easy to face—we can defeat them without much trouble. The violent actions of the police, the harsh anti-socialist laws, the penalties meant to crush revolution—these things only make us look at them with pitying contempt. The real threat is the enemy who pretends to be our friend, who offers a handshake in political alliance, who sneaks in by pretending to be one of us. That is the enemy we must fear the most.

Our stronghold can withstand any attack—it cannot be taken by force or slowly weakened from the outside. The only way it can fall is if we ourselves open the gates and welcome the enemy inside, treating them as if they are one of us. Our party was

born from the class struggle, and it depends on that struggle to survive. As long as we stand firm in it, we cannot be defeated. But if we abandon it, we lose the very thing that gives us strength. Anyone who does not understand this, or who believes that class struggle is no longer relevant or that class divisions are fading away, is thinking like the bourgeoisie.

Right now, there is a debate about what tactics we should use in elections for the Prussian legislature. Some have compared this debate to an old discussion from the 1880s, when Social Democrats in the Reichstag argued over government subsidies for steamships. On the surface, the two discussions may seem similar, but when we look closer, they are completely different. Back then, the argument was about how to apply well-known party principles to a specific issue. Everyone agreed that Social Democrats wanted to support German shipping and trade, but they also strongly opposed colonial policies and imperialist ambitions. The only real question was whether the subsidy would truly help German trade or if it was just a scheme to benefit a few reactionary individuals at the public's expense. At no point did anyone suggest changing the party's overall strategy or mission.

But the debate we are having now is much more serious. It is not just about a specific issue—it is about whether we should completely change our strategy and even the nature of our party itself. This is not just about a single decision; it is about whether we hold onto the class struggle, which separates us from all bourgeois parties, or whether we abandon it. If we take the wrong step, we will no longer be a socialist party. Instead, we will cross a line that cannot be uncrossed and become nothing more than the left wing of bourgeois democracy.

THEORETICAL DIFFERENCES OF OPINION, NOT MATERIAL : TACTICS IS MATERIAL.

Having different opinions on theory is never a danger to our party. We do not place limits on criticism, and no matter how much we respect the founders and early leaders of our movement, we do not believe anyone is infallible. The only true authority we recognize is science, which is always growing and constantly proving that what was once believed to be true can be wrong. Science tears down old, crumbling ideas and builds new ones in their place. It never stops moving forward and does not hesitate to challenge any belief that refuses to change.

At the Union Convention in Gotha twenty-four years ago, I said, "We recognize no infallible Pope, not even a literary one." Later, in 1891, when I explained and supported our newly written party program in Erfurt, which was accepted by everyone, I made it clear that because our program is based on science, it must always be adjusted in small ways to keep up with new discoveries. No one—not even Marx, with all his brilliance—could ever make science perfect and complete. Anyone who truly understands science knows this is simply a fact.

Because of this, no socialist has the right to reject challenges to the theoretical ideas of Marxism or to push someone out of the party just for questioning those ideas. However, it is a completely different matter when these challenges go so far that they try to completely overturn our understanding of society itself. This is exactly what Bernstein is trying to do, and in such cases, we must strongly defend our principles.

Practical rejection of our principles is far more dangerous than arguments about theory. Only a few members care about theoretical debates, but when someone in our party starts to ignore our principles or acts against our party program in practice, it affects every member and confuses everyone if it is not quickly fixed. I believe that most of our members do not care much for Bernstein's writings. They only agree with those who already held similar views, and our enemies are the ones who get excited about it because they hope to split our party or see the whole Social Democracy join the bourgeois camp. I bet fewer than ten thousand of our comrades have ever read Bernstein's book. I do not see it as a fault that they do not spend their time with the old, forgotten writings that the founders of socialism, more than one or even two generations ago, cleared away to make room for true socialism. One might as well say our comrades are unscientific if they still read the ancient writings of Schultze-Delitzsch that lie forgotten in country villages. Just look at the list of people who have commented on Bernstein's book—there is not a single worker among them. Only those members whose job it is to read and discuss such writings show any interest. In contrast, the whole party was very interested in the debate about joining the Prussian legislative elections or forming an election alliance in Bavaria. That lively

discussion showed that our party has grown and matured. We have moved past endless theoretical debates about our platform. We leave the work of building and clarifying our program to science, which is done by only a few. But the practical work of putting our program into action and deciding our tactics is for everyone in the party, and here all of us work together.

Our party has always known that our tactics and our focus on class struggle are very important. When we look at the records of our early meetings in the 1870s, we see that everyone agreed our party must stay pure and not mix with other parties. All other parties, even if they argue a lot, come from the rich, capitalist side. Keeping our Social Democracy separate from all other parties is what makes us proud and strong. Even though our opponents call us political outlaws because of this, we see it as our strength.

At the Hamburg meeting, many delegates almost decided to break away from our old tactics and traditions because of confusing events. But at the last minute, our party changed its mind and voted overwhelmingly against any compromise. This decision still guides us today. If a few election areas chose to work with a bourgeois party, they did so on their own and against the Hamburg resolution—which, remember, was never canceled by the Stuttgart resolution. On the other hand, our comrades in Berlin, who some compromise supporters accused of breaking the Hamburg resolution, have followed it carefully. Their strong stand has kept the party's authority and helped us.

Those who support compromise tactics value having representatives in parliament too much. I do see that parliamentary work is important, but it is only a way to reach our goals, not the goal itself. Our strength is not measured by the number of representatives we have but by the total number of votes behind us. It is a bourgeois idea to overvalue the possession of representatives, because in politics, like in money, power means controlling others. Anyone who puts our party's purity and greatness above all else sees representatives as valuable only if they show the strength of Social Democracy. What do ten or a hundred representatives mean if our party's honor is lost because of them? A representative's value is small, but the value of our party's purity and integrity is beyond measure. Our strength comes from that purity. Just as Samson lost his strength when his hair was cut, our party will lose its strength if we let the bourgeois "Delilahs" trick us into giving up our most precious treasure—our party's purity and honor.

WE ARE A PECULIAR PEOPLE

We cannot act like other parties because we are different. We are kept apart from all other parties by a barrier that might seem easy for anyone to cross, but once someone crosses it, they are no longer a Social Democrat. We are not like the others; what others see as normal and necessary is deadly for us. What has made us the most important party in Germany—the center around which government turns, as Caprivi and daily life show—is not our representatives in the Reichstag. Even if we had three times as many representatives, the rich bourgeois parties would still not fear us. No, it is the fast, natural growth of our supporters that rises from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands, then to millions, every day defying our opponents and making them helpless with anger. This surge of support comes from our fight against all other parties.

Everyone who is tired and burdened, everyone who suffers from injustice and the cruelty of the current bourgeois society, and everyone who values human worth, turns to us with hope, seeing us as the only party that can save and deliver them. But if we, who oppose this unjust and violent world, suddenly reach out in friendship to it, form alliances with its people, and invite our comrades to join hands with the enemy whose wrongs have driven the masses to us, how confused would everyone be! How can the people ever trust us again? If the members of the clerical party, the progressive party, and the other similar parties are our comrades, then why do we struggle against capitalist society, which they all support? What reason would we have for existing then? It would mean that for the hundreds, thousands, and millions who have looked to us for salvation, joining us was a huge mistake. If we are not different from the others, then we are not the right ones—the true Savior has yet to come, and Social Democracy would be just another false savior, no better than the others!

Our strength comes from the fact that we are not like the other parties. We are not just different—we are their enemy, sworn to tear down the stronghold of capitalism that they protect. This is why we are strongest when we stand alone. That does not mean we cut ourselves off from everyone. We have never been without friends, and we never will be, as long as the fight goes on.

The idea that there is one single, united reactionary mass is not something Social Democracy believes in. We know that the people on the reactionary side fight among themselves, and we have always used their internal conflicts to help us. We let our opponents fight each other, but we never let them use us.

For example, we fought against Bismarck—a leader who showed capitalism and militarism in person—by using his own capitalist opponents to weaken him. We

used the divisions among them to our advantage, and that was not a compromise or even a short break.

In the same way, when we vote in the Reichstag against the Agrarians and choose some ideas from the Progressive party, that is not a compromise or a temporary truce. It is simply a smart move that does not change who we are.

Our party must stay separate from all other parties because of Germany's unique history and political conditions. Unlike France and Belgium, we do not have a revolutionary middle class that we can join with for a short time.

Germany also lacks democratic institutions that let a Social Democrat work in government alongside members of other parties. In Switzerland, the government is simply an administration chosen by the people. A Social Democrat there is just like any other council member. That is why our Swiss comrades could vote without worry for a government monopoly on things like grain and brandy, trusting that the money would not be wasted on ideas that hurt the people or the community.

Even in France, things are different from here. There, the government is clearly a class government—one of the most class-based in the world—but the ties between the classes are weak. The power of democracy and social democracy is so strong that people do not fear that the government will be used forever for reactionary or oppressive purposes. For example, a few years ago, the socialist Jaures introduced a bill about grain trade in France that, on the surface, looked very similar to a bill in the German Reichstag by Count Kanitz of the Agrarian party. But deep down, they were very different. In France, there is no separate agrarian class; the middle class rules directly, yet they are kept from controlling important parts of the government like the police, army, and courts. In Germany, however, the situation is not the same.

Time and again, we see the sad fate that stopped Germany from reaching a liberal stage in its political development. Yes, Germany is ruled by a capitalist class state—in a very bad way—but the capitalist rule is only indirect. They have to allow the purely Catholic clerical party, known as the Center, to share power in the German parliament, and they let the Prussian agrarian class—a backward group that does not really serve any important political or economic purpose and lives off others—control the administration.

Because of this, German Social Democracy must act as the champion of political freedom. The German working class now has the job of uniting the fight for economic independence with the fight for political liberty. In other words, besides doing its own work for its class, it must also do what the middle class long ago did in other, more developed countries.

THE INCLINED PLANE OF COMPROMISE

Every political party sees us as a strong force, and the more powerful we are, the more they notice us. Even the wildest reactionary, who says we should not exist, ends up helping us by his own actions. Because other parties ask for our help, some of our comrades think we should change our ways. They want to stop our old method of fighting with class struggle and start using deals, backroom agreements, and compromises instead. But these people forget that the power which makes other parties want to work with us—yes, even our worst enemies—comes from our old class struggle tactics.

If Marx, Engels, and Lassalle had agreed with Bernstein and his followers to use compromise and depend on rich parties, then Social Democracy would never have been born; we would have been just a small part of the Progressive party. We have always used the fights among bourgeois parties to our advantage, and that is obvious without any extra advice from new party leaders. Our comrades know that sometimes working with the Center or Progressive party to fight against a reactionary government is useful, even without merging with them. In some election districts, we gained more by working with the Center party without merging than we did by joining an alliance in Bavaria. One rule cannot fit every situation.

We Social Democrats must not be like the other parties. All the other parties are just as responsible for the unfairness of our system as anyone else. Everyone who suffers from these wrongs turns to us for help. Many people come to us after they have failed to get justice from the courts, the government, the Emperor, or any other party. They may not know all the details of our plan or understand what capital and capitalism mean, but they feel that we are the only ones who can help when everyone else fails. This trust gives us endless strength.

A similar kind of desperate faith once spread through the crumbling Roman Empire and helped bring it down. We lose this endless power if we join with other parties and tell suffering people that we are not really different from them. Once we let go of our fight for our class and start making compromises, there is no turning back—we will only fall further and further.

We have learned this lesson many times in the Reichstag. Real-life politics forced us to make some compromises with the society we live in, but every time we did this it hurt us, and we did it only when we had no choice. Some people laugh at us for making these compromises, but someone who is too scared to take even one step is a more trustworthy friend than someone who mocks those who are careful.

The word “revolution” is really silly. It is silly to say “revolution” and “revolutionary” all the time. They can end up sounding empty and like a repeated chant. Even though it is silly to brag about being in our party and to share our views every chance we get when it is not needed, that does not mean we should throw away

all that is good. We must not say that showing our party's revolutionary side is always ridiculous. In fact, stressing that our party is revolutionary is very serious and very important.

It is serious because being a member of Social Democracy means facing a hard fight—a political fight full of severe punishment and a personal fight to survive. For most people, this struggle is much harder than a simple political battle. And it is important because the strength to face both these struggles comes only from knowing that the unfairness in our society—which oppresses, ruins, and harms most people today—can be ended only by a true revolutionary movement. That means a movement that will completely destroy capitalism from its very roots.

I know that some people like to laugh at the warning about sliding down a slope. They even compare it to the story of the sheep and the wolf. But this comparison is weak and eventually hurts those who laugh. The wolf was real, and in the end, it broke into the flock. In our case, the danger we warn about is not made up. No matter what, our party's interests are just as well protected by those who warn as by those who laugh. In the past, being cautious was seen as a good quality in a democracy, while being too confident was seen as a bad quality. Yet, now some people try to turn that idea around.

BLUECHER'S MOTTO

The working class stands in complete opposition to the current social and political system. They must fight this system on every front, whether it concerns issues at home or in other countries. It is not always easy to decide what is right because sometimes our true interests are not clear, and our feelings can be easily misled. Luckily, when it is most difficult to choose, the clear actions of our enemies act like an infallible guide. Even if there are times when we work with them on certain issues, it is unthinkable that anything our enemies fight for as something very important could ever be good for the working class. We will always be on the right side if we do what our enemy opposes, but if we do what our enemy supports, we will almost always be wrong.

History shows us that conflict never ends. There is always a struggle of interests, races, and classes. In any ordinary business, friendship matters little, so it matters even less in a struggle like this. Being overly kind or sentimental does not win any battles; it has only brought many defeats. Bluecher's saying, "Always follow the cannon's roar and throw yourself upon the enemy," is a good rule to live by in political warfare.

I want to add one more point. The rich middle class has a much stronger sense of its own group than the working class does. The ruling class naturally understands its own interests much better than the people who are ruled, because those who are ruled have fewer chances to learn and are often tricked or misled about what really matters to them. Do not say that it is the rough way in which socialism is sometimes presented that scares the rich. That is completely false. It is not the style or form they dislike, but the ideas behind it. In fact, the softer the presentation, the more dangerous the ideas seem to the rich. The way something is presented does not change how much they dislike it, as can be seen in the way they argue among themselves.

There has been a lot of false talk about "Toelke's club!" But the idea of club tactics has been around in Germany for many years and has not completely disappeared. However, these club tactics are not the solution for workers or socialists. They are the methods used by the national liberals—the proud, noble part of the nation—who in parts of Germany organized groups of tough fighters to hold on to power by brutal force. Yet, the growing power of social democracy has nearly wiped them out.

COMPROMISES LIKE TREATIES ARE NOT KEPT

In any case, we can be sure that our rich class opponents, when their own interests are at stake, will always oppose us. One clear example comes from Belgium. There, under very good conditions, a deal was made between the socialists and the liberals. Our party was clearly in charge, so we did not lose out on the benefits of their joint victory. The goal was to have every person vote equally and directly.

But the religious party knew its own supporters very well. It knew that the rich class did not want to give workers—the majority in modern industrial countries—the right to vote equally, because that would allow the workers to win a majority and control the government. So they demanded a voting system where the rich got more votes, giving the radical rich a share in government if it helped stop equal voting.

And sure enough, the radical rich quickly broke their deal with the socialists and joined the religious party in fighting against equal, direct voting and social democracy. Anyone who is not convinced by this example that the struggle for freedom by the working class is a class struggle is not worth further argument.

No political party will fully support Social Democracy. Any help we might get from bourgeois parties in the messy world of politics must, if we are smart, come without any compromise. Compromises and joining with other parties are like treaties between nations—they last only as long as they help everyone involved. When both sides already share the same interests, there is no need for any compromise or merger.

For example, imagine that winning six extra representatives in the legislature was very important for our party in Bavaria. With our strength and power, we could have achieved that without any shady deals. Strengthening the Center party, apart from the issue of our principles, was a big tactical mistake. This mistake was even worse because it stopped the Center party from breaking apart, which it is now doing.

That party stays together as long as the workers under its influence have not yet become aware of their class interests or learned to put their class needs above their religious or group loyalties. This change naturally comes with economic growth, and we want to speed it up with our message. In Offenbach and other areas, this has happened to such an extent that in the last election, most Catholics voted for our candidates on the first ballot instead of voting for the candidates of their own party.

Using class struggle tactics is not only the right thing to do in principle, it is also more practical and successful than compromise tactics.

The idea of usefulness, as stressed by the supporters of the Bavarian compromise, is very helpful, but there are other things we must think about too. The purity of our principles and the idealism in our struggle give us strength and courage in every battle. They also make our ideas very attractive to everyone who feels oppressed and has a sense of honor. It is true that our alliance with the Center party

was useful because it gave us about six votes in the legislature; but as Gretchen once said,

“How scornfully I once reviled
When some poor maiden was beguiled!
More speech than any tongue suffices
I craved to censure others’ vices.
Black as it seemed I blackened still,
And blacker yet was in my will;
And blessed myself and boasted high –
And now – a living sin am I!”

Yes, we used to be able to criticize the political manipulators very boldly—especially the worst ones! But today, we do not dare to do everything our opponents do. We do not risk giving up everything for small advantages. For what is an advantage for our enemies is like deadly poison for us. The nobility say “noblesse oblige,” meaning they are bound to act in a generous way; so we say “socialisme oblige”—socialism has its own duties that we must never abandon.

If our plan tells us that we should work with our enemies for a quick win, then Schuhmacher in Solingen acted as a clever tactician last year by joining with the Progressive party during the Reichstag elections. He did not become one of the rich; he only used the rich to defeat us—the false socialists—and to help real socialism win, just as Millerand will beat militarism by making a deal with Gallifet and Waldeck-Rousseau. Schuhmacher can give the same reasons for his actions as Millerand can for his. We call that treason against our party.

As Social Democracy grows and moves into areas that other parties used to control, and as we do more practical work, we often find ourselves in brief unions or short-term ties with other parties. But these short ties must never turn into full alliances that bind our party. We must always keep our options open; take advantage of every chance; let our opponents do the hard work for us; and, with our party’s goal always in mind, stick to our own path, joining with others only when our goals match theirs.

We are a party of the class struggle. We have nothing in common with any other party, and we must fight and defeat all other parties to reach our goal. We must never lose sight of this truth.

MILLERAND

About Millerand and the idea of joining parties, I wrote a letter at the request of my French comrades during the last annual meeting of the Labor Party (the Marxists) at Epernay. In my letter I said:

"Dear Friends, you know that I have always made it a rule not to interfere in the affairs of socialists in other countries. But since you want to know what I think about the big question that is now on the minds of all the workers and socialists in France—and since many of your fellow countrymen, who have very different views from yours, have also asked me—I have no reason to keep my opinion secret any longer. The situation you are dealing with in France is, at its heart, not something foreign for us Germans."

"The fact that socialism is international is clear and growing stronger every day. We socialists are one nation, united all over the world. The capitalists, with all their helpers and tricks, are also one international group. Today, there are really only two big groups fighting in the class struggle: on one side, the working class that stands for socialism, and on the other, the rich class that stands for capitalism.

"As long as capitalism exists and the rich rule, every country is divided by class, and every government works for the ruling class. These governments are meant to fight the class struggle between capitalism and socialism—between our enemies and us. This truth is proven by both clear thinking and facts.

"If a socialist joins a government run by the rich, he either switches sides or ends up under the control of the enemy. In any case, a socialist who works for a bourgeois government separates himself from us, the true, militant socialists. He may say he is a socialist, but he is not, because he does not understand that the class struggle is the very foundation of socialism.

"Today, in our capitalist society, even a government that tries to be kind and has good intentions cannot really help our cause. We must not be fooled by dreams or illusions. Many years ago, I said, 'If the road to hell is paved with good intentions, then following illusions will only lead to defeat.' In our world, a government that is not capitalist is

simply impossible. Any socialist who joins such a government without turning against his own class only makes himself weak.

“The English rich give us a clear example of how letting opponents into government can weaken them. In England, it is common for all parties to give a spot in government to the most radical member of the opposition if he is naive enough to be tricked. This person then acts as a shield for the government and stops his own side from fighting back—just as in battle, you cannot shoot at hostages held by the enemy.

“That is my answer to the question of whether a socialist should join a government run by the rich.

“Now, to answer the second question about unity and agreement: The answer comes from our party’s own ideas and interests. I support the unity of our party—both in our country and around the world—but this unity must be among socialists only. Being united with people who have different goals and interests is not true socialist unity. We must work for unity no matter what and make any sacrifice needed. But while we come together and organize, we must remove any people who do not share our ideas. Imagine if a general in an enemy country tried to fill his army with soldiers from the enemy—that would be very foolish. In our case, to include enemies—people with goals and interests completely opposite to ours—in our army, which is meant to fight for the class struggle, would be pure madness, even like committing suicide.

“We are very strong because we fight based on the class struggle. If we abandon that struggle, we are lost because we are no longer socialists. The strength and power of socialism comes from our fight—that is, from the fact that the working class is exploited and oppressed by the capitalist class—and from the reality that in a capitalist society, real changes to end class rule and class oppression are impossible.

“We cannot sell out our beliefs. We must not make any deals or compromises with the ruling system. We have to break away from that system and fight it until it falls. Only when the ruling class is defeated can socialism come to be. We cannot expect the ruling class to end its own rule. That is why the International Workingmen’s Association taught, ‘The freedom of the working class must be won by the workers themselves.’

“Surely, there are a few rich people who, because they care about justice and humanity, side with the workers and socialists. But they are only the exception. Most of the rich, the bourgeoisie, know very well that they are the ruling and exploiting class. In fact, they have a much stronger sense of their own class than the working class does.

“I will finish by saying: You asked for my opinion, and I have given it to you. Now it is up to you to do what our party’s interests and principles demand. Fraternal greetings to the convention at Epernay. Long live socialist France and the working class! Long live international socialism!

**“Weimar, August 10, 1899
W. Liebknecht.”**

I have nothing more to say beyond what I wrote in my letter. Everything that has happened since then has proven it to be true. Having a socialist in the government has not achieved anything that could not have been done without them, nor has it stopped anything that could not have been stopped without their presence. On the other hand, because the Social Democracy supported or allowed a socialist to join the government, it has also taken on some of the blame for everything the government did or failed to do during that time.

THE SITUATION IN FRANCE

Some people might say that they acted under very hard conditions to save the republic, which might have been lost. But that excuse does not hold up when we look at it closely. The French republic is kept alive not by a few government men—even if one of them is a socialist—but by the French workers, along with most of the peasants and small business owners, and by most French people who do not let priests mislead them or let the rich force them to obey.

War and the love of military power are much weaker and less dangerous in France than in Germany. The French army is more like an army of the people. Even though France has fifteen million fewer people than Germany, its army is just as large, so it makes up a larger part of the population.

France has now reached a point where it must break away from the Prussian-German military system that it adopted after the war of 1870-71. It must either follow the advice of the war minister, General Gallifet, and build a well-trained guard like the old Praetorian Guard, or quickly switch to a system where every person who can use a weapon is armed. With such an army, a coup d'état is impossible. No matter how strict some officers may be, most of the soldiers are too close to the people to be used against them.

If people say that the formation of the Waldeck-Rousseau Ministry was needed to protect the republic from a coup, then the strong support for the republic among the French working class is a much better safeguard for the government than having a socialist in the cabinet.

The fact that the leader of this government was a clear supporter of capitalism and that the Minister of War was one of the most infamous sword-wielders of "Little Napoleon"—as well as one of the most brutal killers of the Communists—made it even clearer that Millerand's choice was wrong. But even if, instead of Waldeck-Rousseau, there had been a true Democrat, like Brisson, and instead of Gallifet, an honest soldier who had never spilled the blood of workers, the decision would still have been just as unacceptable from our point of view, though it might not have felt as personally offensive.

There is now a real divide between classes, and that divide has led to a struggle between them. As long as this division and struggle continue, the state will always be a tool of one class over the other, and the government will always serve the ruling class. A socialist who joins such a government will either quickly forget their loyalty to their class—if they haven't already left it behind like a Muslim taking off their shoes before entering a mosque—or, if they are truly committed, they must take the first chance they get to challenge the government and break away from it.

I don't want to get into a purely academic debate about whether there could ever be a situation where a socialist might join a non-socialist government. That

could only happen after a complete collapse of the state—like during a world war—when the government of the ruling class had fallen apart, but there weren't yet the right conditions to build a socialist state. That is not what has happened in France, and it is unlikely that the people best suited to "save the Republic" would be Waldeck-Rousseau and Gallifet. The Socialist Party has always been, still is, and will always be the only party meant to protect and defend the Republic, whether Millerand is part of it or not.

Guesde and Lafargue, the main voices of scientific socialism in France, have strongly criticized the idea of socialists joining the government just to get along with the ruling class. They explained the big difference between being part of an elected group, like a parliament or city council, and being part of the actual government that runs the country. Government officials work to protect the interests of the ruling class—that's just the way the system is set up. But elected bodies, like the Reichstag or other legislatures, represent the will of the people. Even though these institutions are influenced by the ruling class, they also have the power to challenge and eventually change it.

Socialist representatives in these elected groups are like strong, unshakable rocks that have pushed up through the layers of the old system. They come from the people, belong to the people, and represent the people's power, which stands above all political and social structures. They are not in office because the rulers want them there, but because the people chose them—despite the efforts of those in power to stop them. These representatives serve, but not the rulers. They serve the people, working to make their voices heard and their will carried out.

So, calling socialist participation in these elected bodies a "compromise" with the ruling class is simply wrong. Yes, socialists have to work in the same space as their opponents, but they do so as an independent force, carrying out the people's will. This isn't cooperation based on shared goals; it's a constant struggle, a battle of ideas and power. And just like in physics, where opposing forces push against each other and determine the direction of movement, the struggle inside these institutions shapes the laws and policies that govern society.

It is natural that through this constant struggle, different groups may sometimes come together for a short time, but calling these temporary connections "compromises" is completely wrong. When people work toward the same goal for a brief moment because of circumstances, that does not mean they have made a deal, formed an alliance, or agreed to any kind of lasting compromise. It's like the pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope—sometimes they touch, but that doesn't mean they are permanently joined together.

Whether this movement is caused by a simple mechanical force or by the structure of the political system, it makes no difference. These brief moments of alignment have no lasting commitments. They happen in the moment, exist for that moment, and disappear just as quickly as they came.

It is completely wrong to compare working together in second-round elections to the kinds of alliances that were suggested for the Prussian legislative elections or actually made in Bavaria. This kind of cooperation is just a part of the larger election battle that the party fights. After the first main election day, there is a follow-up fight to decide any remaining undecided races. If, in these later elections, we cannot put forward our own candidate, it only makes sense to vote for the opposition candidate who will benefit our party the most. This is just common sense.

I have supported this idea for a long time, even when some of the people who now strongly favor joining in Prussian elections once accused me of almost betraying our principles for saying the same thing. If there is a law that directly targets us, or if such a law is being planned, and we refuse to support the candidate who opposes it, then we would be acting foolishly. But this is not a compromise. We do not make promises, we do not give up any of our beliefs, and we do not lose anything. Instead, we act in our own best interest, which we would be harming if we did anything else. It is our opponents who are taking on any obligations.

This strategy is so simple and obvious that only a confused way of thinking ever questioned it. When party leaders stopped officially promoting it, the regular members of the party still followed it on their own, using their own good judgment. And each situation was handled openly and clearly, case by case. There was no secret dealing, no dishonest actions—everything was done in the open. We face our enemies directly, and when we are forced to choose between two, we take down the one who is the bigger threat. This is how a party that is ready to fight should act.

INDEPENDENT ACTION IS THE ONLY THING THAT IS PRACTICAL

Some people criticized me for saying in a newspaper article that a new anti-socialist law is not as bad as giving up our class struggle and merging with the Prussian Progressive party in the legislative elections. The more I think about it, the more I believe I was right. What will happen to our party if we let fear or danger force us away from our principles? Fear is known to be a very poor guide for making decisions, and for a party, fear can lead to destruction. Fear of the labor movement and socialism has already caused the downfall of the German rich, and our Social Democracy will soon be finished if we listen to fear. We must not let fear push us into doing things that go against our principles, our nature, and the honor of our party. If you try to defeat an enemy by being timid and gentle, you only make him stronger. We are not saying we should be reckless; we want to be practical. But has anyone ever said we are not practical? We have always been practical, even if Bernstein disagrees. We always work step by step using the conditions we have, keeping our goal in sight. In cities, states, and the whole country, Social Democracy has supported or even suggested all reasonable improvements. Just think of the greatest reform—the reform to end social evil—where the government, if it doesn't want to build ruins or empty promises, must follow the demands we made more than ten years ago.

We can say of ourselves that we are not only practical, but that we are the only truly practical party—that is, the only one that is truly reasonable. Only those who understand how things naturally change and work steadily toward a clear goal are truly practical. And that is exactly how we work. Our opponents either do not understand these natural rules or, if they do, they try to change or break them. Trying to force water to flow uphill is not practical, and that is exactly what our opponents try to do. Some say that workers alone cannot win their freedom and that smart, educated people from other classes must help them. We are shown the many measures that help workers which are passed or supported by rich parties, but this is just a trick of words. Because, and Bismarck's record makes this clear, none of these social reform measures—even though there are only a few—would have ever been passed without the drive and pressure from the working class and Social Democracy.

Bernstein says that socialism comes out of liberalism. But saying that means you ignore that there is always a fight between classes. My old comrade Miquel, who is now Chancellor, turned that statement around. He said, "Liberalism is the ultimate outcome of communism." He also shows that his idea of liberalism is almost the same

as conservatism in Germany—that is, it resembles the old, feudal idea of keeping people in bondage. Everyone who listens and watches can see this.

No, Social Democracy must stand on its own and build its power from within. Any power we try to borrow from others is only a weakness. Believing in our own strength and in the world-changing mission of socialism is the secret to our amazing success.

Islam was unbeatable as long as it trusted only in itself and saw every non-Muslim as an enemy. But when Islam started to compromise and join with non-Muslims—the so-called civilized powers—it lost its power to conquer. That was bound to happen because Islam was never the true faith that could save the world. Socialism, however, is the true force that can save the world, and it cannot do so if it stops relying on itself.

Therefore, we will not turn away from our old tactics or our old program. As we continue to grow with science and economic progress, we remain exactly what we have always been, and we will continue to be that way. Otherwise, Social Democracy will cease to exist.

Wilhelm Liebknecht

No Compromise – No Political Trading

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SOCIALISM AND ETHICS

Pity for poverty, enthusiasm for equality and freedom, recognition of social injustice and a desire to remove it, is not socialism. Condemnation of wealth and respect for poverty, such as we find in Christianity and other religions, is not socialism. The communism of early times, as it was before the existence of private property, and as it has at all times and among all peoples been the elusive dream of some enthusiasts, is not socialism. The forcible equalization advocated by the followers of Baboeuf, the so-called equalitarians, is not socialism.

In all these appearances there is lacking the real foundation of capitalist society with its class antagonisms. Modern socialism is the *child of capitalist society and its class antagonisms*. Without these it could not be. Socialism and ethics are two separate things. This fact must be kept in mind.

Whoever conceives of socialism in the sense of a sentimental philanthropic striving after human equality, with

no idea of the existence of capitalist society, is no socialist in the sense of the class struggle, without which modern socialism is unthinkable. To be sure Bernstein is nominally for the class struggle – in the same manner as the Hessian peasant is for “the Republic and the Grand Duke.” Whoever has come to a full consciousness of the nature of capitalist society and the foundation of modern socialism, knows also that a socialist movement that leaves the basis of the class struggle may be anything else, but it is not socialism.

This foundation of the class struggle, which Marx – and this is his immortal service – has given to the modern labor movement, is *the main point of attack in the battle which the bourgeois political economy is waging with socialism*. The political economists deny the class struggle and would make of the labor movement only a part of the bourgeois party movements, and the Social Democracy only a division of the bourgeois democracy. The bourgeois political economy and politics direct all their exertions against the class character of the modern labor movement. If it were possible to create a breach in this bulwark, in this citadel of the Social Democracy, then the Social Democracy is conquered, and the proletariat thrown back under the dominion of capitalistic society. However small such a breach may be in the beginning, the enemy has the power to widen it and the certainty of final victory. And the enemy is most dangerous when he comes as a friend to the fortress, when he slinks in under the cover of friendship, and is recognized as a friend and comrade.

The enemy who comes to us with open visor we face with a smile; to set our foot upon his neck is mere play for us. The

stupidly brutal acts of violence of police politicians, the outrages of anti-socialist laws, the anti-revolution laws, penitentiary bills – these only arouse feelings of pitying contempt; the enemy, however, that reaches out the hand to us for a political alliance; and intrudes himself upon us as a friend and brother, – *him and him alone have we to fear.*

Our fortress can withstand every assault – it can not be stormed nor taken from us by siege – it can only fall *when we ourselves open the doors to the enemy and take him into our ranks as a fellow comrade.* Growing out of the class struggle, our party rests upon the class struggle as a condition of its existence. Through and with that struggle the party is unconquerable; without it the party is lost, for it will have lost the source of its strength. Whoever fails to understand this or thinks that the class struggle is a dead issue, or that class antagonisms are gradually being effaced, stands upon the basis of bourgeois philosophy.

The present discussion over tactics in relation to participation in the elections to the Prussian legislature, has been compared to the discussion which took place among the Social Democratic members of the Reichstag in the middle of the '80s concerning the steamship subsidy. If one examines the matter only superficially the comparison appears strikingly close, but ceases to be so as soon as the kernel of the question is reached. At that time we were concerned with the application of universally recognized principles to a concrete case. That the Social Democratic faction in the Reichstag was interested in the furtherance of German shipping and commercial interests was as universally admitted as that they were opposed to the colonial policy and

all other imperialistic reactionary tendencies. The only question was whether the subsidy was primarily in the interest of the German commercial interests, which were national in their character, or whether it was a part of colonial politics that served only the private interests of reactionary individuals at the expense of the public. No one suggested at that time to change the old tactics or alter the course of the party. The present discussion, however, is concerned with the question of a complete change of the old tactics and aims; a change of tactics that would mean a change in the character of the party. It turns upon the question of the retention or abandonment of the class struggle standpoint which distinguishes us from all bourgeois parties; in short, it involves a decisive step, upon which depends whether we shall remain a socialist party, or whether we shall bridge over the Rubicon of the class struggle and become the left wing of the bourgeois democracy.

THEORETICAL DIFFERENCES OF OPINION, NOT MATERIAL: TACTICS IS MATERIAL

Diversity of opinions on theoretical points is never dangerous to the party. There are for us no bounds to criticism, and however great our respect may be for the founders and pioneers of our party, we recognize no infallibility and no other authority than science, whose sphere is ever widening and continually proves what it previously held as truths to be errors; destroys the old decayed foundations and creates new ones; does not stand still for an instant; but in perpetual advance moves remorselessly over every dogmatic belief. At the Union Convention held at Gotha twenty-four years ago I

said, “We recognize no infallible Pope, not even a literary one.” And when in 1891, in Erfurt, I explained and advocated the newly drafted platform, which was unanimously adopted, I declared that just because our program was a scientific one it must be constantly changed at minor points to meet the continuous advance of science. And I maintain that no man – Marx, in spite of his comprehensive and deep intellect, as little as any other – can bring science to final perfection; and this position is for everyone who understands the nature of science a foregone conclusion. No socialist, therefore, has the right to condemn attacks on the theoretical ideas of the Marxian teachings or to excommunicate any one from the party because of such attacks. But it is wholly different when such attacks imply a complete overturning of our whole conception of society, as, for example, is the case with Bernstein. Then vigorous defense is in order.

Far more dangerous than theoretical assaults are practical disavowals of our principles. Theoretical discussions interest only a comparatively small portion of our membership; whereas practical disavowal of principles and tactical offenses against the party program touch every party comrade and arouse the attention of every party comrade; and when they are not quickly checked and corrected they bring confusion into the whole party. I do not believe I shall be disputed by any one who is familiar with the circumstances and with the party, when I say that the masses within the party care little for Bernstein’s writings. They only find sympathy among those who have formerly held similar views, and they arouse a sensation only among our opponents who wish to see fulfilled their old hopes of a split in the party, or to see the whole Social Democracy go over

with drums beating, into the bourgeois camp. I will wager that not ten thousand of our comrades have ever read Bernstein's book, and I am far from considering it as a reproach to the party that they show no inclination to busy themselves once more with the underbrush that the founders of socialism, more than a generation ago, yes, in some cases more than two generations ago, hewed down in clearing the way for socialism. One might just as well accuse our comrades of being unscientific because they no longer read the antedeluvian writings of Schultze-Delitzsch that may be lying around somewhere in country villages as dust-covered and shopworn goods.

Look at the list of those who have commented on Bernstein's book. There is not a single laborer among them. It is only those comrades whose professional duty it is to read and discuss such writings. With what interest, on the contrary, the whole party followed the question of participation in the Prussian legislative elections, or the election alliance in Bavaria – how lively was the discussion! This lively interest showed the maturity of the party. We are past the stage of theoretical debates about platforms. The establishment, elaboration and clarifying of our program we leave to science, which in our present society is the business of only a few. But the practical application of our program, and the tactics of the party are the business of all; here all work together.

The supreme importance of tactics and the necessity of maintaining its class struggle character, is something the party has been well conscious of from the beginning. If we read the proceedings of the early conventions held in the '70s

we find that in all questions of tactics the thought was continually kept in the foreground that the party must be kept clean from all mixture with all other parties, every one of which, no matter how much they differed from each other or how furiously they fought among themselves, stood upon the ground of bourgeois society as a common basis. This separation of the Social Democracy from all other parties, this essential difference, which silly opponents take as a reason or pretext for declaring us political outlaws, is our pride and our strength.

In the Hamburg convention, where under the influence of a series of confusing circumstances, the mass of the delegates appeared decided to break with the old tactics and traditions, the party still recovered itself at the last moment before the leap into the dark and declared itself by an overwhelming majority as opposed to every compromise. And this resolution has remained in force to the present day. If two or three election districts have been induced to enter into an alliance with a bourgeois party, this was done upon their own responsibility and in undoubted violation of the Hamburg resolution, which, let me repeat, was not repealed by the Stuttgart resolution. On the other hand, the Berlin comrades, who have been complained of by the friends of compromise as violators of the Hamburg resolution, have conscientiously followed the spirit and letter of it, and by their decisive stand maintained the authority of the supreme party council and performed a service to the party.

The advocates of compromise tactics overestimate the value of parliamentary activity and parliamentary representation. Not that I do not recognize the enormous

value of parliamentary activity, but this is not an end, but only a means to an end. Our power is not measured by the number of representatives, but by the total number of votes that are behind us.

It is a bourgeois feeling to overvalue the possession of representatives. In representation as in money there is power – power over others. Whoever places the purity and the greatness of our party above all else, for him representatives have value only in so far as they serve to give expression to the power and extent of Social Democracy. What do ten, what do a hundred representatives signify, when our escutcheon has lost its gloss through their acquisition? The value of a representative is small. But the value of the integrity of our party is immeasurable. *In it rests our strength*. As with the shorn hair, that signified his manhood's honor, the strength of Samson disappeared, so the strength of our party would cease if we allowed the bourgeois Delilahs to flatter away our most precious jewel and the roots of our triumphal strength – the party purity, the party honor.

WE ARE A PECULIAR PEOPLE

We may not do as other parties, because we are not like the others. We are – and this cannot be too often repeated – separated from all other parties by an insurmountable barrier, a barrier that any individual can easily surmount; but once on the other side of it, and *he is no Social Democrat*.

We are different from the others; “we are other than the others.” What for the others are necessities and conditions of life are death to us. What is it that has made of us in Germany the pivotal party, which according to the significant

testimony of Caprivi and the teaching of daily experience makes us the axle around which governmental politics turns? Most assuredly not our representatives in the Reichstag. We might have three times as many representatives, and the allied bourgeois parties would have nothing to fear from us. No, it is the avalanche-like increase of our supporters that gradually, with the certainty of a natural law, or more correctly of a natural force, grows from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands, and from hundreds of thousands to millions, and is daily increasing, bidding defiance to our opponents and driving them into impotent rage. And this avalanche-like increase has come, and is coming, as a consequence of our opposition to and struggle with all other parties.

All who are weary and heavy laden; all who suffer under injustice; all who suffer from the outrages of the existing bourgeois society; all who have in them the feeling of the worth of humanity, look to us, turn hopefully to us, as the only party that can bring rescue and deliverance. And if we, the opponents of this unjust world of violence, suddenly reach out the hand of brotherhood to it, conclude alliances with its representatives, invite our comrades to go hand in hand with the enemy whose misdeeds have driven the masses into our camp, what confusion must result in their minds! How can the masses longer believe on us? If the men of the clerical party, of the progressive party, and the other boodle parties are our comrades, wherefore then the struggle against capitalist society, whose representatives and champions all of these are? What reason have we, then, for existence? It must be that for the hundreds and thousands, for the millions that have sought salvation under our banner, it was all a colossal

mistake for them to come to us. If we are not different from the others, then we are not the right ones – the Savior is yet to come; and the Social Democracy was a false Messiah, no better than the other false ones!

Just in this fact lies our strength, that we are not like the others, and that we are not only not like the others, and that we are not simply different from the others, but that we are their deadly enemy, who have sworn to storm and demolish the Bastille of Capitalism, whose defenders all those others are. Therefore we are only strong when we are alone.

This is not to say that we are to individualise or to isolate ourselves. We have never lacked for company, and we never shall so long as the fight lasts. On the essentially true but literally false phrase about a “single reactionary mass,” the Social Democracy has never believed since it passed from the realm of theory to that of practice. We know that the individual members and divisions of the “single reactionary mass” are in conflict with each other, and we have always used these conflicts for our purposes. We have used opponents against opponents, but have never allowed them to use us. We have in the person of Bismarck, the agrarian, fought personified capitalism and militarism and utilized all his capitalistic opponents to weaken him; thus we have used particularism; and thus the bourgeois democracy. That was, however, no compromise, not even a momentary truce. Just as little as it is a compromise or momentary truce when we in the Reichstag vote against the Agrarians in favor of some measure of the Progressive party.

This exclusiveness of the German Social Democracy as opposed to other parties is especially required of us, because

of the historical development and political conditions of Germany. We have no revolutionary bourgeois with whom we might temporarily unite as in France and Belgium.

We have no Democratic institutions that make it possible for a Social Democrat to take part in the government side by side with members of other parties. In Switzerland the government is little more than an administration, and one chosen by the people at that. A Social Democrat, as a member of the government of a canton signifies little more than a Social Democrat in a common council. Accordingly our comrades in Switzerland could vote unreservedly for the government monopoly of grain and brandy without feeling that the money secured thereby would be squandered for purposes hostile to the people and injurious to the community.

Even in France things are somewhat different from here, although the government is emphatically a class government (occasionally so in a degree scarcely equaled by any other government); yet the relations are so little consolidated, and the influence of the democracy and of the social democracy is so great that any permanent misuse of the governmental powers for reactionary and oppressive purposes is not to be feared. Accordingly it was possible a few years ago for the socialist Jaures to introduce a bill in the legislative chamber regarding the grain traffic, which was externally but little different from the bill introduced in the German Reichstag by Count Kanitz of the Agrarian party. Yet the inner difference was all the greater. In France there is no agrarian class; the bourgeoisie rules directly, yet under conditions that would prevent it from making the means of government – police,

army and class judiciary – the end and purpose of the state, as in Germany is not only possible, but is the actual case. We here come again and again upon the tragical fate that robbed Germany of the liberal stage of political development. We have, to be sure, a capitalist class state, and that in the worst sense of the word, but the bourgeois capitalism only rules indirectly; it has to be satisfied to let the purely Catholic clerical party, the Center, hold the balance of power in the German house of representatives, and to let the Prussian agrarian class, a backward anachronistic class, that has no essential function to fulfill either in political or economic life, and has a purely parasitical existence, control the administration. The result of this is that the social democracy of Germany must fulfill the role of champions of political freedom. The task of uniting the struggle for economic independence with that for political liberty has fallen upon the German laboring class; in other words, besides performing its own class mission, it must do what in normally developed lands was long ago done by the bourgeoisie.

THE INCLINED PLANE OF COMPROMISE

All parties without exception recognize us as a political power, and exactly in proportion to our power. Even the craziest reactionary that denies us the right of existence courts our favor and by his acts gives the lie to his words. From the fact that our assistance is sought by other parties, some of our comrades draw the strange conclusion that we should reverse the party tactics, and in place of the old policy of the class struggle against all other parties, substitute the commercial politics of log rolling, wire pulling and

compromise. Such persons forget that the power which makes our alliance sought for, even by our bitterest enemies, would have had absolutely no existence were it not for the old class struggle tactics. If Marx, Engels and Lassalle had accepted from Bernstein and his modest or not modest fellow thinkers the tactics of compromise and dependence upon bourgeois parties, then there never would have been any Social Democracy; we would have been simply the tail of the Progressive party. That we accept as a part of our tactics the utilization of the quarrels among the bourgeois parties is self-explaining. And this course has been followed ever since we have had a German Social Democracy. To recognize this, we do not need the counsel of the newly baked party statesmen. That we have here and there worked with the Center or the Progressive party against a reactionary governmental party is understood by the comrades without the necessity of a special party manifesto. And in different election districts we have obtained greater advantages by co-operation with the Center party without fusion than through the recent alliance in Bavaria. One rule does not fit every case.

We Social Democrats dare not be like the other parties, all of whom are equally guilty of the injustices of the present system and equally responsible for them. Every one who suffers under these injustices looks to us for deliverance. Every one of us has had these victims of society, after failing to get justice from the courts, from the government, from the Emperor himself, and from all the other parties, come to us as the last and only ones that can help them. They do not know our scientific program; they do not know what capital and capitalism mean; but they have the belief, the feeling,

that we are a party that can help when all other parties fail. This belief is for us an inexhaustible source of power. It was a similar faith of despair that spread more and more in the decaying Roman empire and slowly undermined the heathen world until it finally collapsed. We give up this inexhaustible source of power if we ally ourselves with other parties and drive suffering humanity from us by saying to it: "We are not essentially different from the others." Once the boundary line of the class struggle is wiped away and we have started upon the inclined plane of compromise, there is no stopping. Then we can only go down and down until there is nothing deeper. We have had many instructive experiences of this in the Reichstag. Practical politics compelled us to make concessions to the society in which we lived. But every step on the way of concessions to present society was hard for us, and was only done with reluctance. There are some who ridicule us for this. But he who fears to take a step on the inclined plane is at all events a more trustworthy comrade than he who pours out scorn upon the cautious one.

The catch word "revolution" is certainly ridiculous. Ridiculous it certainly is – and no one has expressed this more clearly than I myself – to drop the words "revolution" and "revolutionary" out of the mouth at every opportunity. It can become as mechanical a song as saying one's beads. But ridiculous as it is to boast of belonging to the party and to express one's views at every opportunity when there is no necessity for it, still such exaggerations do not justify us in throwing away the good with the bad, and declaring that to emphasize the revolutionary character of our party is, under all circumstances, ridiculous. To emphasize it is a very serious and a very necessary thing. It is serious, because

membership in the social democracy means a struggle, a political struggle with grievous persecutions, and a private struggle for existence, a struggle that for the majority is far more difficult and heavy than the political struggle. And it is *necessary*, because the courage for this twofold struggle is created only by the consciousness that the injustice of society by which the great majority of mankind are to-day oppressed, corrupted and crippled, can only be abolished through a revolutionary movement, that is, a movement that shall completely exterminate capitalism with every fiber of its roots.

I know that it has here and there become the fashion to laugh at the warning about sliding down inclined planes. They refer us to the fable of the sheep and the wolf. The comparison limps, however, and finally turns against the laugher. The wolf was actually there and at last broke into the fold. And in our case it is also no imaginary danger from which we are warned. And at all events the interests of the party are at least as carefully guarded by the warners as by the scorners. Heretofore distrust was counted as a democratic virtue, and over-confidence as a democratic vice. Here and there are found persons who would reverse this maxim.

BLUECHER'S MOTTO

The proletariat stands politically as well as socially in the most abrupt contradiction to the present class state. It must fight it on all fields and upon every question, both of domestic and of foreign policy. To be sure it is not always easy to decide rightly. Where the interests are not clearly visible the feelings may be easily deceived. Fortunately we

have at the points where it is hardest to decide an infallible compass in the actions of our enemies. If there are questions on which we can temporarily unite with them it is still inconceivable that anything that is fought for by our enemies as a question of great importance, or especially as of vital importance to them, can be desirable for the proletariat. We shall never go wrong if we do what is opposed to the interests of our enemy. On the other hand, we shall almost never go right if we do what our enemies applaud. Historical development is a continuous conflict, a conflict of interests, a conflict of races, a conflict of classes. And if friendship does not count even in ordinary business, how much less so in such a conflict. Good-naturedness and sentimentality have no place in politics. They have never won a victory, but have brought unnumbered defeats. Bluecher's motto, "Always follow the cannon's roar and throw yourself upon the enemy," is the best rule also in political warfare.

Just a word in this connection. The class instinct of the bourgeoisie is far better developed than that of the proletariat. The governing class naturally knows its interests better than the governed, who have so much less opportunity to become informed and are also sometimes intentionally, and sometimes not, systematically deceived and misled from a recognition of their interests. Do not say that it is the rough form in which socialism is often set forth that frightens and embitters the bourgeoisie. That is absolutely false. It is not the form; it is the content which they detest; and the more harmless the form so much the more dangerous do the contents appear to the gentlemen of the bourgeoisie. The fineness of the form makes no difference to them. That is

clear from the manner in which they fight out their quarrels among themselves.

What a lot of abuse and fiction has been brought out about “Toelke’s club!” “Toelke’s club” really never touched any one ungently. But club tactics has existed in Germany for decades, and has even yet not wholly disappeared. But it is not laborers and also not socialists with whom the club counts, as the *ultimo ratio*, the conclusive argument. It is the tactics of the noblest of the nation, the national liberals, who in the middle and southwestern portions of Germany organized battalions of brawling club heroes, and thereby sought to retain their political domains through a brutal terrorism. But the advancing social democracy has well nigh stamped them out.

COMPROMISES LIKE TREATIES ARE NOT KEPT

At any rate we may be sure that the political instinct of our bourgeois opponents, as soon as their class interests come into play, will lead them to take a position hostile to us. A classical example is furnished by Belgium, where, as already remarked, a compromise was concluded under the most favorable circumstances conceivable, between the socialists and the liberals. Our party was in undisputed possession of the leadership and was therefore in no danger of being cheated out of the fruits of the common victory. The end sought was universal, equal and direct suffrage. But the clerical party knows its boys, knows its Pappenheimers. It knows that the bourgeoisie has no class interest in giving the laborers, who, in modern industrial states, constitute a

majority of the population, the universal suffrage and thereby the prospect of winning a majority and getting political supremacy. It made a counter demand for proportional representation with plural voting, that is, giving more votes to the rich, and thereby granting to the radical bourgeoisie a share in the government, if it would assist in defeating universal and direct suffrage. And behold, without a minute's hesitation the gentlemen of the radical bourgeoisie broke their agreement with the socialists and joined the clericals in their fight against universal suffrage and the social democracy. Whoever is not convinced by this example that the emancipation struggle of the proletariat is a class struggle is one on whom further arguments would be wasted.

There is no political party upon whose firm support the social democracy can reckon. And every assistance that we can possibly expect from bourgeois parties in the complications of political life must, if we act skillfully, come to us anyhow without compromise. It is the same with compromises and fusions between parties as with treaties between nations. They are observed so long, and only so long, as they are in the interest of the parties concerned. When common interests exist, however, no compromise, fusion or contract is necessary. Suppose, to cite an actual instance, suppose the securing of six more representatives in the legislature was of great importance to our party in Bavaria; with the strength and influence which our party had it could have found a way to get them without any "cattle trade." The strengthening of the Center party, aside from the question of principles, was a great tactical error. This error was all the greater in that it checked the process of dissolution which the Center party is now undergoing. This party holds together so

long as the laborers who come within the sphere of its influence have not yet attained to class consciousness, have not yet learned to set their class interests above their sectarian interests; this is a process which the economic development necessarily carries along with itself, and which we aim to hasten by our propaganda. In Offenbach and other election districts this has been so far attained that in the last election the majority of the Catholics voted for our candidates on the first ballot instead of for the candidates of their own party. The class struggle tactics is not only more correct in principle; it is also more practical and successful than compromise tactics.

The standpoint of utility, which was emphasized by the advocates of the Bavarian compromise, is certainly a very useful point, but there are other factors than utility which must be taken into consideration. The purity of our principles, the idealism of our struggle, these are factors of strengthening and drawing power that have given to us courage for all our battles, and have given to our doctrines an irresistible attraction for all who feel themselves oppressed and have a sense of honor. Certainly the alliance with the Center party was very useful; it has given us half a dozen legislative votes; but what is it Gretchen says?

“How scornfully I once reviled
When some poor maiden was beguiled!
More speech than any tongue suffices
I craved to censure others’ vices.
Black as it seemed I blackened still,
And blacker yet was in my will;
And blessed myself and boasted high –
And now – a living sin am I!”

Yes, how bravely we could once scold at the political log rollers, especially at the black ones! We painted them blacker than black. And to-day? We dare not do all that our opponents do. We dare not sacrifice everything for advantages. For what is an advantage to our opponents is deadly poison to us. The nobility say of themselves, *noblesse oblige*; so we may say, *socialisme oblige*, socialism imposes its obligations.

If tactics prescribes or allows us to obligate ourselves to our opponents in order to attain a temporary success by a temporary alliance, then Schuhmacher in Solingen acted as a good tactician in the opportunist sense by fusing with the Progressive party last year at the Reichstag elections to rescue the party from us. He did not become a bourgeois, not at all; he only used the bourgeoisie to overthrow us, the false socialists, and to help true socialism on to victory, just as Millerand is going to crush out militarism by a compact with Gallifet and Waldeck-Rousseau. Schuhmacher can give exactly the same reasons for his action as Millerand can for his. Treason to the party is what we call it.

With the growth of Social Democracy and with its entrance into fields hitherto dominated by other parties, and with the extension of our practical activity, we come more and more frequently into momentary unions, or momentary relations with other parties. But these momentary relations must never become momentary alliances. We must never bind the *party*. We must always keep our hand free; exploit the conditions; let our opponents do the dirty work for us; and with the goal of the party firmly in mind, keep in the middle of the road, and go our own way, only going along with opposing parties when our way happens to be the same as theirs. That we are a party of the class struggle, who have nothing in common with any other party, and who have to fight and conquer all other parties, in order to attain our goal, is something which we must never for a moment lose sight of.

MILLERAND

Concerning the case of Millerand, and the question of party union, I wrote at the invitation of the French comrades, on the occasion of the last annual convention of the Labor Party (the Marxists) at Epernay, the following letter:

“Dear Friends: You know that I have made it a rule not to interfere with the affairs of the socialists in other countries. But as you wish to know my opinion on the burning question that is occupying the attention of the whole laboring and socialist portion of France, and as many of your

countrymen, who have wholly different views upon this question from yours, have also turned to me, I have no longer any reason to withhold my opinion. The situation with which you are now occupied in France is at bottom not a foreign affair as to Germans.

“The internationality of socialism is a fact that is daily becoming more evident and more significant. We socialists are one nation to ourselves, – one and the same international nation in all the lands of the earth. And the capitalists with their agents, instruments and dupes are likewise an international nation, so that we can truthfully say, there are to-day only two great nations in all lands that battle with each other in the great class struggle, which is the new revolution – a class struggle on one side of which stands the proletariat, representing socialism, and on the other the bourgeoisie, representing capitalism.

“While the bourgeois world of capitalism continues and the bourgeoisie rules, so long are all states necessarily class states, and all governments class governments, serving the purposes and interests of the ruling class, and destined to lead the class struggle for the bourgeoisie against the proletariat – for capitalism against socialism, for our enemies and against us. From the standpoint of the class struggle which is the foundation of militant socialism, that is a truth which has been raised by the logic of thought and of facts beyond the possibility of a doubt. A socialist who goes into a bourgeois government, either goes over to the enemy or else puts himself in the power of the enemy. In any case the socialist who becomes a member of a bourgeois government separates himself from us, the militant socialists. He may claim to be a socialist but he is no longer such. He may be convinced of his own sincerity, but in

that case he has not comprehended the nature of the class struggle – does not understand that the class struggle is the basis of socialism.

“In these days, under the rule of capitalism, a government, even if it is full of philanthropy and animated by the best of intentions, can do nothing of real value to our cause. One must keep free from illusions. Decades ago, I said: ‘If the way to hell is paved with good intentions, the way to defeat is paved with illusions.’ In the present society, a non-capitalist government is an impossibility. The unfortunate socialist who casts in his lot with such a government if he will not betray his class only condemns himself to impotency. The English bourgeoisie offers the best example of weakening the opposition by permitting them to participate in the government. It has become the traditional policy of all parties in England that the most radical member of the opposition who is naive

enough to be taken in should be given a place in the government. This man serves as a shield to the government and disarms his friends who cannot shoot at him – just as in battle one may not shoot at the hostages that the enemy has placed in front of itself.

“That is my answer concerning the question of the entrance of a socialist into a bourgeois government.

“Now, as to the second question: The question of unity and agreement. The answer is dictated to me by the interests and principles of the party. I am for the unity of the party – for the national and international unity of the party. But it must be a unity of *socialism and socialists*. The unity with *opponents* – with people who have other aims and other interests, is no *socialist unity*. We must strive for unity at any price and with all sacrifices. But while we are uniting and organizing, we must rid ourselves of all foreign

and antagonistic elements. What would one say of a general who in the enemy's country sought to fill the ranks of his army with recruits from the ranks of the enemy? Would that not be the height of foolishness? Very well, to take into our army – which is an army for the class struggle and the class war – opponents, soldiers with aims and interests entirely opposite to our own, – that would be madness, that would be suicide.

“On the ground of the class struggle we are invincible; if we leave it we are lost, because we are no longer socialists. The strength and power of socialism rests in the fact that we are leading a class struggle; that the laboring class is exploited and oppressed by the capitalist class, and that within capitalist society effectual reforms, which will put an end to class government and class exploitation, are impossible.

“We cannot traffic in our principles, we can make no compromise, no agreement with the ruling system. We must break with the ruling system and fight it to a finish. It must fall that socialism may arise, and we certainly cannot expect from the ruling class that it will give to itself and its domination the death blow. The International Workingmen’s Association accordingly preached that ‘The emancipation of the laboring class must be the work of the laborers themselves.’

“Undoubtedly there are bourgeois who from a feeling of justice and humanity place themselves upon the side of the laborers and socialists, but these are only the exceptions; the mass of the bourgeoisie has class consciousness, a consciousness of being the ruling and exploiting class. Indeed, the mass of the bourgeoisie, just because they are a ruling class, have a much sharper and stronger

class consciousness than
the proletariat.

“I conclude: You have
asked my opinion, and I
have given it to you. It is
for you to do what the
interests and principles of
the party demand that
you should do.

“Fraternal greeting to
the convention at
Epernay. Long live the
France of the socialists
and the laborers! Long
live international
socialism!

“Weimar, Aug.
10, 1899
W.
LIEBKNECHT.
”

I have nothing to add to my letter. The events since then have justified it. The presence of a socialist in the government has accomplished nothing and prevented nothing that could not have been accomplished or prevented without this presence. On the other hand, in so far as the Social Democracy has caused or endorsed the entrance of a socialist into the government it has become in part responsible for all the sins of omission and of commission done by the government during the time in which a socialist was a member.

THE SITUATION IN FRANCE

It may be said in excuse or justification that they have acted under extraordinary conditions, – to rescue the republic, which would otherwise have been lost. This excuse will not stand examination. The republic of France is not upheld by a few men in the government, including the socialist, but by the *French laborers* with whom the greater part of the peasants and small bourgeoisie stand side by side, and also by the great majority of the French people, who do not allow themselves to be led astray by the priests, nor coerced by the reactionary capitalists. Militarism is by far less strong and dangerous in France than in Germany, and the French army is to a much greater extent than in Germany a people's army. The army is as large as in Germany, although the population is fifteen million less; it contains therefore a larger per cent of the total population. France is actually at the point where it must break with the Prussian-German military system which it adopted after the war of 1870-71; it must either do as the minister of war, General Gallifet, has recommended – replace it with a well-drilled Praetorian Guard – or enter at once upon the militia system, and arm every person capable of bearing arms. A *coup d'etat* is impossible with such an army. No matter how reactionary a portion of the officers may be, the mass of soldiers are too close to the people to be used for such purposes.

If, as has been represented to us, the actual formation of the Waldeck-Rousseau Ministry was necessary to protect the republic against a *coup d'etat*, then the republican sentiment of the French proletariat was security enough for the government – in every way a far better security than the participation of a socialist in the cabinet.

The circumstance that the chief of this ministry was a particularly clear-cut capitalist, and that the Minister of War was one of the most notorious “saberers” of the “Little Napoleon,” and one of the most bloodthirsty murderers of the Communists, made the impropriety of Millerand’s action all the more evident. But even if in place of Waldeck-Rousseau there had been a genuine Democrat, as for example, Brisson, and in place of Gallifet an honorable soldier not yet stained with laborers’ blood, the step would have been no less objectionable from our standpoint, though it would not have wounded the feelings so much.

Class antagonism accompanied by the class struggle is now an existing fact. The state is, so long as this class opposition and class struggle exists, necessarily a class state, and the government of this state, with like necessity, is a class government. The socialist who allows himself to become a member of such a government will soon lose his class-consciousness, if he has not already laid it down at the door of the cabinet, like a Mohammedan does his shoes at the entrance of the mosque, unless he has the courage to seize the first opportunity offered for a conflict and a break.

I do not care to busy myself with the purely scholastic question as to whether a case might ever possibly arise in which a socialist should enter into a non-socialist government. Such an occasion could only arise after a catastrophic overthrow of the state, for example, during the course of a world war, when the government of a class state had broken down without the necessary elements being yet present for the formation of a socialist state.

Such an occasion has certainly not yet arisen in France, and perhaps the last persons whose mission it is to “rescue the Republic” are just these same Waldeck-Rousseau and Gallifet. It is the *Socialist Party* which was and is and remains the only party whose mission it is to be the rescuer and safeguard of the Republic, and this with or without Millerand.

Guesde and Lafargue, the leading representatives of scientific socialism in France, have set forth in a scathing critique of “Ministerial” opportunist socialism, the distinction between the activity of a member of a popularly elected body and an officer of an executive body of the government itself of the established state. The officials and the government are the organs of class rule, who must from their very nature act in the interests of the ruling class. The participation in a popularly elected body (Reichstag, legislature, common council, etc.) is on the contrary an expression of popular sovereignty, which, though it is subject to the influences of the class rule, is really above it, and is the only power that can make an end of it. The representatives of the Social Democracy in such popular bodies are like the basalt blocks, which, pushed up from the interior of the earth, have broken through the sandstone and slate strata: – they arise from the heart of the people, are a part of the people, and have in themselves the right and the power of popular sovereignty, which overtops and dominates all political and social matters. They are not there by the grace of the powers that be, but against their will, and in spite of their power – servants to be sure, but honorable servants, servants, not of the possessors of power, but of the people, who have chosen them to secure the realization of their

sovereign will. Therefore, it is fundamentally incorrect to designate our activity in the Reichstag and other representative bodies as a compromise with the ruling powers. To be sure, we have to work there together with our enemies, but as an independent power, exercising the mandates we have received from the people. That is no co-operation upon the basis of common views and aims; it is a labor that is a battle – a mutual struggle, a measuring of forces, whose play, direction and intensity, according to the eternal law of the parallelogram of forces, results in legislation and government.

It is in the nature of things that out of this mutual wrestling and struggle, changing groups and momentary contacts should result; to call such momentary groupings compromises is a pure distortion of terms. A coming together as a result of conditions, and a working and striving in the same direction owing to circumstances, is just as little a contract, an alliance or a compromise, as the reciprocal touching of the pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope is a contract, an alliance or a compromise. Whether the shaking power is a mechanical one, or is the force of organized law is all the same. Such approaches are without any obligations, are productions of the moment, born of the moment and swept away with the moment.

It is no loss incorrect to compare co-operation at second ballotings to such alliances as were proposed for the Prussian legislative elections and as were actually made for the Bavarian elections. Such co-operation is only an episode of the battle at the polls which is fought by the party as a whole. After the first and chief election day an after battle follows, in

which the undecided points are fought out. That we, in these subsequent elections in electoral districts where we cannot ourselves put up a candidate, should vote for that one of the opposition candidates whose election offers the most advantages to our party, is a requirement of elementary intelligence. I previously advocated this as an act of self-evident desirability at a time when some of those who are to-day enthusiastic for a participation in the Prussian legislative elections accused me of a half-betrayal of our principles. If, at a time when an exception law exists, or is in sight, we did not give our votes in these special elections to that one of two bourgeois candidates who was opposed to the exception law, we should be asses deserving the cudgel. But that is no compromise. We pledge ourselves to nothing, we sacrifice no principle, we sacrifice no interest; on the contrary, we act solely in our own interest, which we should have injured had we acted otherwise. The obligations rest upon our opponents. This tactics is so simple and natural that it was only brought into question for a time by an unclear hobby-riding of principles; as soon as the party leaders ceased to recommend this tactics, the rank and file of the party, following a sound instinct, carried it out anyhow over the heads of those leaders. And from time to time a special line of action was decided upon for each particular case. No trafficking, no underhand work; open and above board we attack the enemy; and where two enemies stand in opposition, one of whom must win the mandate, we strike the most dangerous of the two to earth. This is a policy of fighting such as befits a fighting party.

In the original elections for the Reichstag, we are a fighting party that by its own strength wins its share in the popular

representation. We offer battle front to all parties, not even excepting those for whose members we may vote at the supplemental elections as the interest of our party may require. But in the Prussian legislative elections it is impossible for us to win a single representative by our own strength; in order to gain one or more it is necessary to turn to a bourgeois party and make a political trade with them. In the Reichstag elections we are the strongest party in Germany, but in the Prussian legislative elections we are the weakest of all, indeed, completely helpless; because under the “worst of all election laws” we have, to be sure, a vote, but our vote is rendered nugatory, and a mandate can only be secured under the condition that we become dumb voting cattle of a bourgeois party.

In the Bavarian legislative election things are somewhat different. In Bavaria, the election laws do not make it impossible to secure a mandate. This does not argue in favor of a compromise, but, on the contrary, places the “cattle trade,” which took place this summer, in a still worse light.

I will not here enter upon the grounds of opposition to participating in the Prussian legislative election. The demoralization through the change of front in the Reichstag elections and the legislative elections, the confusion in the minds, the loosening of discipline, and above all the obliteration of the class struggle character of our party has been already, and by myself among others, so often and so emphatically set forth that I will not tire the reader by a repetition.

Only one thing more.

If the bourgeois parties still had any vitality left they would not need our help to secure a victory in the Prussian legislative elections. The first two classes belong to the bourgeois electors. No one can rob them of a majority if they do not themselves surrender it. How then can we help them? Can one make the lame or the drunk walk? One can help them up, but as soon as one lets go they fall to the ground like an empty sack. We cannot escape this dilemma; either the bourgeoisie still has political vitality – in which case they do not need our help; or they do not have it, and in that case our help would be useless. Can we be expected to make an alliance with a corpse?

INDEPENDENT ACTION IS THE ONLY THING THAT IS PRACTICAL

Fault has been found because I said in a newspaper article that a new anti-socialist law would be less evil than the abolition of class antagonism and party lines through fusion with the Prussian Progressive party in the legislative elections. The more I consider it the more I am convinced of the correctness of this position. What is to become of our party if we allow ourselves to be pressed out of the path of our principles by threatened or threatening dangers and disadvantages? Fear is proverbially a poor adviser for human action; for a party it is destruction. Fear of the labor movement and socialism has caused the political downfall of the German bourgeoisie; and the days of the Social Democracy are numbered as soon as the cry of fear finds a response in us. We should not challenge, but we should not sound the alarm and be misled by fear into taking steps that do not accord with the principles, the nature and the honor of

our party. One does not disarm an enemy through timidity and gentleness; one simply emboldens him. Not that we should seek to run our heads through a wall. We wish to be and must be “practical.” But has this ever been denied or questioned? We have always been “practical,” Bernstein to the contrary notwithstanding. We have always based our efforts on existing conditions and worked methodically with our eye upon the goal. In cities, states and empire, all reasonable improvements have at least been supported, if not proposed by the Social Democracy. Think only of the greatest of all reforms, the reform of the social evil, in which the government, if it does not wish to build ruins or air castles, must take hold of the demands made by us over ten years ago.

We can say of ourselves, that not only are we practical, but that we are the only practical party – practical in the sense of reasonable. Only those who recognize the organic laws of development and systematically strive in harmony with them towards a definite goal are practical. And this is the way we work. Our opponents either do not know these laws, or else if they recognize them they seek to bend or break them. Whoever seeks to compel water to run up hill is certainly not practical, and such is the foolish aim of our opponents. To be sure it has been said that the laborers cannot alone secure the emancipation of the laboring class; that the intelligent and cultured elements of the other classes must co-operate with them. We are pointed to the many measures useful to the laboring class which are enacted or supported by the bourgeois parties. But this is sophistical reasoning. For (and on this point the evidence of Bismarck is decisive) none of these social reform measures, and surely they are few

enough, would ever have been enacted *without the initiative and the pressure of the proletariat and the Social Democracy.*

Bernstein claims that socialism is the ultimate outcome of liberalism. To claim this is to absolutely deny the existence of any class antagonism.

This sentence was reversed by Miquel, my former comrade *in communismo*, and present Chancellor *in re*, so as to read, Liberalism in the ultimate outcome of communism. And that the liberalism of Miquel is very near to conservatism, in the German sense, that is, to the agrarian medieval ideal of personal bondage, every one knows who has ears to hear and eyes to see.

No, Social Democracy must remain for itself, must seek for and generate its power within itself. Every power outside of ourselves on which we seek to lean is for us only weakness. In the consciousness of our strength, in our faith in the world-conquering mission of socialism lies the secret of our extraordinary, almost miraculous success.

Islam was unconquerable so long as it trusted in itself alone and saw an enemy in every non-Mohammedan. From the moment when Islam entered upon the path of compromise and united with the non-Mohammedan, the so-called civilized powers, its conquering power was gone. With Islam it could not have been otherwise. It was not the true world redeeming faith. Socialism, however, is this, and socialism cannot conquer nor redeem the world if it ceases to believe upon itself *alone*.

Therefore, we will not turn from the old tactics, nor from the old program. Ever advancing with science and economic development, we are what we were and we will remain what we are.

Or – the Social Democracy will cease to exist.